

Culturally Responsive Trauma Informed Programming

Definitions

Historical Trauma: The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma.

Trauma Informed Approach: The manner in which a program, agency, organization, or community thinks about and responds to those who have experienced or may be at risk for experiencing trauma. The term implies a change in the organizational culture to ensure that all components of the organization incorporate a thorough understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma, the role that trauma plays, and the complex and varied paths in which people recover and heal from trauma.⁴

Principles

1. Establish relationships based on mutuality and respect.

- a. Understand and honor a process that is fluid, where organizations and survivors are constantly learning from one another.

Tip: Be intentional about practices that embrace shared learning and uplift cultural wellness and wisdom.

- b. Be the change you want to see. The organizational culture reflects the work that it promotes in the communities. Staff and volunteers feel welcomed and part of the team. There is room to voice concerns and share ideas.
- c. Be humble. Engage in ongoing self-reflection regarding your own power, privilege, values, history, beliefs, experiences of trauma, etc. to avoid creating the abusive structures that you are trying to dismantle. Resist re-traumatization

2. Seek a deep understanding of the communities you work with (socio-cultural and sociopolitical histories, as well as current context, intersections of oppression, trauma, etc.) and centralize this cultural understanding in your work.

- a. Understand intersectionality. Show evidence that your organization understands that trauma arises not only as an experience of isolated violence, but also from

systemic oppression, discrimination, and significant hardships that survivors face. Understanding the intersections of these issues is tremendously important.

- b. Be ready to challenge your assumptions. Be aware of the diversity within communities and avoid making generalizations.
- c. Use cultural traditions and values for enhancing prevention and intervention efforts to end violence, always being careful not to “romanticize” or deify the culture.
- d. Be flexible and honor the concept of family as defined by the individual. In some cultures, grandparents, godparents, close friends and others are given equal access within the family structure.

3. Understand the origins of trauma including historical, collective, and the inter-generational transmission of trauma. Do not minimize the resiliency, wisdom, and strength of survivors. They have much to teach on how to heal from trauma.

- a. Approach the work from a social justice perspective and pay close attention to your practices from this lens. This perspective will radically change your stances, ideas, expectations, and approaches to the work at hand.

4. Keep the realities of the survivors and their children central to your work, regardless of the specific work that you do.

- a. Make sure the intervention/prevention efforts reflect the realities of the people who will participate. This requires both knowledge and involvement with the local community.

5. Your organization alone will not be able to end poverty. Believe in the power and collective wisdom of communities.

- a. Involve participants (including youth) in updating existing programming in addition to developing new topics, activities, research studies, advocacy, community education, and evaluation strategies. Ground your work in the community you are seeking to reach. Implement community engagement strategies where the process for obtaining information and sharing resources goes both ways and where communities and organizations always learn from one another. Avoid outreach strategies that don't produce any tangible results, mainly because the information goes only in one direction.
- b. Create and maintain strong networks with other agencies, organizations, and systems you can collaborate with to enhance the work for social change and justice.

Condensed from ‘Trauma Informed Principles through a Culturally Specific Lens’, National Latino Network