

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding to Avoid Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Youth Populations

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Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding

- Students who have had highly stressful experiences in their lives can experience difficulties in the school setting.
- Childhood trauma can have a direct, immediate, and potentially overwhelming impact on the ability of a child to learn.
- Learning, remembering, trusting, or managing feelings and actions can be a painful challenge for a child who has experienced violence or other adversity.
- Being unaware of trauma's impacts can result in children being harshly punished as behavior is misread as lazy, apathetic, or intentional misconduct.

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding

- Children and youth are presenting in with challenges that prevent them from learning.
- Children and youth are facing a myriad of issues that stem from community violence, exposure to domestic violence, and poverty.
- Do you have children and youth who have similar experiences?
- What current challenges do you have in connecting with them and maintaining their behavior?



Schools have an important role to play in providing stability and a safe space for children and connecting them to caring adults.

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding

- Greater likelihood of performing below grade level
- Higher rates of office referrals, suspensions, and expulsions
- Decreased reading ability, language and verbal processing deficits, delays in expressive and receptive language
- Greater tendency to be **mis**classified with developmental delays or referred for special education services



What you may see...

- ANGER, FRUSTRATION, DISRUPTION
- Anxiety, fear, and worry
- Changes in behavior (anger outbursts, change in academic performance, irritability, absenteeism)
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Emotional numbing
- Over or under reacting to environmental stimuli (sirens, physical contact, doors slamming, bells)
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (including writing and artwork)



What is Trauma?

- An experience that threatens life or physical integrity and that overwhelms a person's ability to cope or the capacity to regulate emotions.
- Evoke feelings of extreme fear and hopelessness
- Reactions to traumatic events are determined by the subjective experience of the individual, which could be impacted by developmental and cultural factors.
- Children who have experienced traumatic events may have behavioral problems, or their suffering may not be apparent at all.

Potentially Traumatic Events

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Death or loss of a loved one
- Life-threatening illness in a caregiver
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Automobile accidents or other serious accidents
- Bullying
- Life-threatening health situations and/or painful medical procedures
- Witnessing or experiencing community violence (e.g., shootings, stabbings, robbery, or fighting at the home, in the neighborhood, or at school)
- Witnessing police activity or having a close relative incarcerated
- Life-threatening natural disasters
- Acts or threats of terrorism (viewed in person or on television)
- Living in chronically chaotic environments in which housing and financial resources are not consistently available

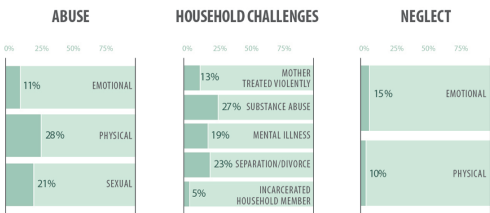


Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.
- These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian. Homelessness, poverty, loss or death of loved ones or friends, and exposure to violence.
- Research has found that the highest levels of risk for negative outcomes are associated with having experienced multiple ACEs.

TYPES of ACEs

The ACE study looked at three categories of adverse experience: **childhood abuse**, which included emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; **neglect**, including both physical and emotional neglect; and **household challenges**, which included growing up in a household where there was substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of a mother or stepmother, parental separation/divorce or had a member of the household go to prison. Respondents were given an ACE score between 0 and 10 based on how many of these 10 types of adverse experience to which they reported being exposed.



Center for Disease Control & Prevention

Traumatic reactions are
NORMAL responses
to ABNORMAL
situations.

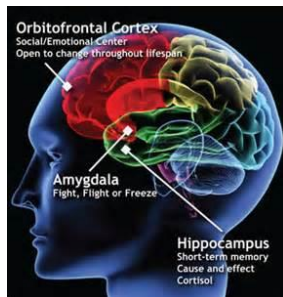
Realize. Recognize. Respond.

- Intense fear
- Helplessness
- Loss of control
- Threat of harm, hurt, or death



Realize. Recognize. Respond.

- Two parts of our brain respond to danger
 - “Thinking” Brain (Prefrontal cortex): Regulates thoughts and attention
 - “Doing” Brain: (Amygdala): Responds to danger and/or fear
 - Hippocampus: Learning and memory
 - Hippocampus: Learning & memory



Realize. Recognize. Respond.



- Cognitive functioning & Academic capabilities
- Physical appearance
- Emotional well-being
- Spirituality
- Developmental impairment
- Relationships
- Worldview
- Learning
- Classroom behavior

Realize. Recognize. Respond.

Children may be impacted by a traumatic event; however, not all children have the same response.



Realize. Recognize. Respond.

- A child's response to these potentially traumatizing events will vary depending on:
 - Characteristics of the child (e.g., age, stage of development, personality, intelligence and prior history of trauma)
 - Environment (e.g., school and family supports),
 - Experience (e.g., relationship to perpetrator)

Effects of Trauma on Student Population

Effects on Preschool Students

- Preschool students may **lose recently acquired developmental milestones** and may **increase behaviors** such as bedwetting, thumbsucking, and regress to simpler speech. They may become **more clingy** to their parents and worry about their parents safety and return. These young students may also become more **irritable with more temper tantrums** and have more **difficulty calming down**. A few students may show the reverse behavior and become **very withdrawn**, subdued, or even mute after a traumatic event. These students may have **difficulties falling or staying asleep** or have nightmares about the event or other bad dreams. Typically these students will process the event through post-traumatic play.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Effects of Trauma on Student Population

Effects on Elementary School Students

- Elementary students may show signs of distress through **somatic complaints** such as stomachaches, headaches, and pains. These students may have a **change in behavior**, such as increase **irritability, aggression, and anger**. Their behaviors may be inconsistent. These students may show a **change in school performance** and have impaired attention and concentration and more school absences. Late elementary students may **excessively talk** and ask persistent questions about the event.

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Effects of Trauma on Student Population

Effects on Middle and High School Students

- These students exposed to a traumatic event **feel self-conscious** about their emotional responses to the event. They often experience feelings of **shame and guilt** about the traumatic event and may express fantasies about revenge and retribution. A traumatic event for adolescents may foster a **radical shift** in the way these students **think about the world**. Some of these adolescents may begin to **engage in self-destructive or accident-prone behaviors, and reckless behaviors**. There may be a shift in their interpersonal relationships with family members, teachers, and classmates. These students may show a change in their **school performance, attendance, and behavior**.

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- Trauma-informed care views service provision through a lens of trauma.
- Approaches can be broken into two categories:
 - Trauma-informed systems approaches
 - Trauma-specific treatment interventions

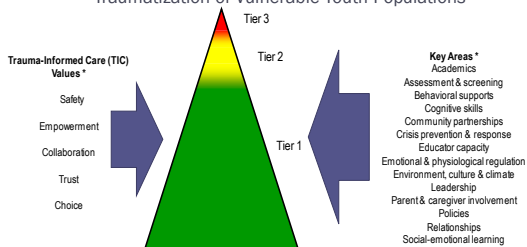
Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) provides a new model under which the basic premise for organizing services is transformed

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding to Avoid Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Youth Populations

- **Realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
 - Acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic occurrence in students' lives
- **Recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system
 - Acknowledging trauma and its triggers, and be sensitive to unique needs of students
- **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
 - Providing a safe, stable, and understanding environment for students and staff & Create a flexible framework that provides universal supports
- Seeks to **Resist** re-traumatization.
 - Prevent re-injury or re-traumatization by avoiding stigmatizing and punishing students.

Source: Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

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Tier 1 – Universal strategies & instruction for all students
 Tier 2 – Additional supports for students with milder symptoms of trauma or in high-risk groups
 Tier 3 – Intensive & ongoing interventions for students deeply impacted by trauma

* TIC Values & Key Areas apply across all 3 tiers of the PBIS Framework.

TIC Values are from Fallot & Harris, Community Connections, www.ccdc1.org

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding to Avoid Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Youth Populations

• Establish Safety

- Individual accommodations
- Predictability-Structure-Consistency
- Reduce seclusion & restraint

• Empowerment

- Mental health in curriculums
- Building
- Balancing Accountability

Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding to Avoid Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Youth Populations

• Collaboration

- Consultation Teams – FBA, fellow staff
- Student & Family Centered

• Choice

- Gives Choices & Alternatives
- Safe places to cope

• Trust

- Positive regard
- Rationally detach
- Role model

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- Exercise and eating healthy
- Engaging in a hobby or activity
- Creating a health consistent structure and pattern in your personal life.
- Knowing your limits.
- Improving your understanding of trauma and secondary trauma.
- Taking a time out.
- Seeking support from co-workers, family, friends
- Professional counseling
- Vacations



Realizing, Recognizing, & Responding to Avoid Re-Traumatization of Vulnerable Youth Populations

- **Take care of yourself.** By taking care of yourself first, you will be in a better position to help others while avoiding burnout.
- **Empower students by offering choices and praising positive choices.** Avoid power struggles with students by offering choices for participation and encouraging their sense of agency and control over their lives.
- **Be sensitive to the fact that students' parents/caregivers may also be trauma survivors.** When working with parents and caregivers, recognize that their past experiences may influence how they interact with you and the school.
- **Check in with students.** Let the student know that you care and the school cares.
- **Remember anniversaries.** Students may reveal that a particular date or time of the year reminds them of a traumatic experience (e.g., the date a student was placed into foster care or the anniversary of a loved one's death).

Contact

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