



Trauma Informed Care
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Overview

- Distinction between trauma specific and trauma informed services
- Understanding traumatic stress
- Consequences and symptoms of trauma
- Principles of trauma informed care
- Values that differentiate trauma informed services and traditional services
- Strength- based assumptions



Trauma Informed and Trauma Specific Services

- Trauma informed services are not specifically designed to treat the symptoms or syndromes related to trauma
- A trauma informed system is one in which all components of a given service have been considered in light of a basic understanding of the role that violence plays in the lives of consumers served by our agencies
- Services accommodate the vulnerabilities of trauma survivors so as to avoid inadvertent retraumatization and facilitate consumer participation in treatment
- Also requires closely knit collaborative relationships with service system partners (e.g. child welfare and juvenile justice)



Trauma Specific Services

- Trauma specific services are designed to treat the actual sequelae of trauma
- Examples include:
 - Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Prolonged Exposure Therapy
 - Cognitive Behavioral Intervention in Schools



What is traumatic stress?

- Traumatic stress refers to the physical and emotional responses of an individual to the events that threaten the life or physical integrity of the individual or of someone critically important to them (parent, sibling, spouse)
- Traumatic events overwhelm an individual's ability to cope and elicit feelings of terror, powerlessness, and out-of-control physiological arousal



Consequences of Trauma in Children

- Hyperarousal
- Disassociation
- Attachment problems
- Lack of empathy – antisocial
- Aggression
- Impulsive behaviors
- Emotional rather than a cognitive response to problems



Consequences of Trauma in Adolescents

- Traumatized youth are likely to lack a future orientation
- Traumatized youth lack trust in adult's ability to ensure safety and often "take matters into their own hands"
- Some youth are likely to have distorted materialistic values
- Traumatized youth are likely to view life as meaningless
- Violence can be seen as an attempt to achieve justice, as the youth sees it
- With needs so great and overwhelming, many of the youth who have experienced trauma have not developed empathy.



Consequences of Trauma in Adults

- Dissociation
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Hyper-vigilance
- Terror
- Anxiety
- Negative auditory hallucinations
- Numbness
- Depression
- Substance Abuse
- Self-injury
- Eating problems
- Sexual promiscuity
- Poor judgment and continued cycle of victimization



Principles of Trauma Informed Care

- Care must be collaborative, supportive, skill-based, and focused on helping children, youth and their parents reclaim control
- Providers recognize that coercive interventions can cause traumatization and retraumatization and are to be avoided.



Principles of Trauma Informed Care

- Maximize the child's sense of safety
- Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion
- Address the impact of trauma and subsequent changes in the child's behavior, development and relationships
- Coordinate services with other agencies



Principles of Trauma Informed Care continued

- Utilize a comprehensive assessment of the child's trauma experiences and their impact on the child's development and behavior to guide services
- Support and promote stable relationships in the life of the child
- Provide support and guidance to the child's family and caregivers
- Manage professional and personal stress



Trauma informed service providers demonstrate:

- An appreciation for the very high prevalence of traumatic experiences in persons who receive mental health, child welfare and juvenile justice services
- A thorough understanding of the profound neurological, biological, psychological and social effects of trauma and violence on the individual, and how these effects can translate into a person's everyday behavior
- Commitment to providing care that is collaborative, supportive and skill based



Prerequisites for Trauma Informed Services

- Administrative Commitment to Change
- Universal Screening
- Staff Training and Education
- Hiring Practices
- Review of Policies and Procedures



Administrative Commitment to Change

- Commitment to trauma informed services should become a part of an organization's mission statement
- A defining element of a trauma informed system is that an understanding of trauma is integrated into how staff understand and respond to those being served



Universal Screening

- Screening should occur routinely, as soon after admission as possible
- Screening need not be complex or threatening
- Screening conveys that histories of violence and victimization matter



Staff Training and Education

- Since all staff interact with consumers at some level it is imperative that all receive introductory information on the impact of trauma
- More meaningful than providing an intensive training for “specialized” staff
- The outcome should be an infusion of trauma informed responses to consumer behavior on the part of all staff



Hiring Practices

- Hiring and evaluation practices should incorporate three broadly based standards that incorporate the principles and practices of trauma informed care:
 - Values and beliefs
 - Job specific competencies including relationship building and de-escalation skills
 - Professional self awareness and self control



Review of Policies and Procedures

- Review all policies and procedures in light of trauma informed care principles
- Want to ensure that there are not policies and procedures that re-traumatize consumers
 - Seclusion and restraint



Useful Strength Based Assumptions

- It is critical to have strength based assumptions in order to respond constructively to a traumatized child
 - (Hodas, 2004)
- Most of the time the “manipulative child” is feeling very out of control
- Behavior that may appear to be intentional usually is not
 - it is more likely reactive, impulsive or the result of limited social skills and emotional competence



Strength Based Assumptions continued

- The child needs developmental support – and help in the acquisition of new skills
- Formation of a therapeutic relationship is critical. Elements of a therapeutic relationship: supportive, respectful, friendly, consistent, non-threatening, based on clear expectations and standards



Strengths based assumptions continued

- A therapeutic relationship does not necessarily mean that the adult is engaged in psychotherapy, but the adult behaves in ways of therapeutic benefit to the child.
- This includes expressions of caring and support, managing one's own frustrations, and opportunities for the child to express oneself, to be listened to and to save face



Strength based assumptions continued

- The core consideration in interacting with children who are challenging involves helping them avoid shame and humiliation
- A respectful approach to the child increases the child's sense of safety and security and therefore increases the likelihood of openness to input



Programmatic Elements that Promote Trauma Informed Care

- Programs can effectively create and maintain non-coercive, trauma informed environments by employing a prevention focus
- Training and continued supervision and coaching for staff is imperative
 - Goals include avoidance of restrictive procedures and the need for collaboration with child, family and other involved professionals



Programmatic elements continued

- The physical environment should be appealing, age appropriate and culturally competent
- Programming should include strategies that engage the child to that participation is active and not coerced



Programmatic elements continued

- Active efforts to help each child develop effective social and coping skills. The likelihood of impulsive, aggressive behavior decreases when a child has alternative ways to deal with frustration and resolve issues
- Helping the child understand the dynamics of trauma as they apply to his/her life and adaptation efforts to date



Trauma Informed Care

“If you can, help others:
if you cannot do that,
at least do not harm them.”

- Dalai Lama





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