Trauma-Informed Care: Moving from Concept to Practice

2019 Bringing it Home: Ending Homelessness in NC
May 22, 2019
Logistics & Content

- Be comfortable
- Clarifying questions, time for Q&A at the end
- Topics
  - Brief trauma overview
  - Trauma-informed work at the system level
  - Trauma-informed work at the agency level
  - Next steps for your agency
Presenters

- Corey Root, Coordinator
  Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness

- Kari Thatcher, MPH, Prevention and Evaluation Specialist
  NC Coalition Against Domestic Violence

- Megan Raymond, Community House Program Manager
  Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC)
Who’s in the room?

- Service providers
  - Front line staff
  - Program managers
  - Executive Directors
- System-Level/Macro/CoC Leads
- Clinicians
- People with lived experience of homelessness
Trauma Basics
What is Trauma?

A threat to an individual or their loved one’s life, or to their psychic or bodily integrity.

The individual’s coping capacity &/or ability to integrate their emotional experience is overwhelmed.

Adapted from Giller 1999, NCDVTMH 2012, Packard//NIWRC 2012
Examples of Traumatic Events

- Warfare
- Accidents
- Violence
- Threat of violence
- Natural disasters
- Forced displacement
- Job loss
- Serious illness
- Financial problems
- Divorce or breakup
- Death of a loved one
- Forced separation from a loved one
- Acquiring a disability
Types of Trauma

**Acute Trauma:** Single traumatic experience
  - Example: car accident, death of a loved one

**Complex Trauma:** Multiple traumatic experiences
  - Example: Repeated acts of abuse and violence
Historical/Collective Trauma

The cumulative emotional, physical, and psychological wounding of a group of people; typically experienced based on race, creed, or ethnicity

- Example: hate crimes, chronic stressors like racism/poverty, institutional abuse/neglect, genocide

Any abuse of power by one person/group over another group/community
Historical/Collective Trauma

Adverse community experiences: an aggregate of trauma experienced by community members, or an event that impacts a few people but has structural and social traumatic consequences.

Collective trauma can break social ties, communality, and undermine previous supportive resources.
Historical/Collective Trauma

A collective feeling they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways.

Cultural trauma not only highlights trauma at a community level but also the necessity of community level intervention to deal with trauma collectively.
Trauma and the Brain
The Way Our Brain Functions

**Limbic**
the “reacting” part of brain
- regulates response to threats, danger and emotion
- survival-related reactions

**Frontal Cortex**
the “thinking” part of brain
- used for planning, problem solving and organizing
3 Ways PTSD Affects the Brain

• Threat perception systems is enhanced
• Ability to distinguish between the relevant and the irrelevant is damaged
• Self-sensing part of brain gets blunted.
Following a trauma, people often experience:

• **Re-experiencing**
  • Nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive images

• **Hyper-arousal**
  • Jumpiness, irritability, insomnia

• **Avoidance or denial**
  • Avoiding people, places, things associated with the trauma, oversleeping, isolating oneself, minimizing the trauma
No two people’s experiences are the same.

- How one was raised
- Individual perception
- The amount of affection one received
- Whether or not one felt overwhelmed in previous situations
- The support system someone has or doesn’t have
- What one fears
- Brain Chemistry
- Internal coping mechanisms
Why is it important for homeless services agencies to be trauma informed?
Trauma-Informed Work at the System Level
Orange County context

• Home of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough & UNC Chapel Hill
• Smallest CoC in North Carolina
• 152 people experiencing homelessness on one night in 2018
• 2 key homeless service providers + many other services + glorious collaboration
• Many innovative initiatives
• Many homeless system gaps
Work within the homeless service system

- Identified as a system-need in 2016-2017
- Conflict resolution training half-day training October-November 2017
- Trauma-informed care full-day training in November 2017, 90 people trained
  - So successful!
- Follow up session January 2018 to frame system-level work
  - Less so!
- Work identifying specific issues continued at the agency-level (more on this in just a bit...)
Work across systems in Orange County

- Joined Orange Resilience Initiative (ORI) in January 2018

- ORI goals
  - Increasing community connectedness
  - Decreasing siloes
  - Increasing self care for service providers

- ORI activities
  - Service provider “community cafe”
  - Screenings of the documentary “Resilience”
  - Speakers bureau

- Self care sessions sponsored by the Orange County Partnership to End Homelessness
Successes & challenges

- Increasing base-level understanding about trauma, ACEs, why thinking about trauma is important
- Timing of self-care sessions & attendance
- Introducing ONE MORE THING to crisis-response work
- Giving service providers self-care skills, providing time, place, & snacks
- Forging connections across systems within Orange County increases connectedness
Trauma-Informed Work at the Agency Level
Inter-Faith Council for Social Service (IFC)

- Shelter Services (Community House and HomeStart)
- Community Based Assistance
- Community Kitchen (meals for everyone)
Trauma-informed work at IFC

- Trainings related to best practice around maintaining a trauma-informed environment
- Integrating Trauma-informed language into our agency policies
- Individual and group supervision for staff where trauma-informed practices are emphasized
SUCCESSES
- Resident involvement in decision making
- Being more mindful of language
- Modeling vs. enforcing

CHALLENGES
- External regulations
- Shifting societal mindsets

BOTH
- Internal guidelines
- Training staff
Next steps to become more trauma-informed
Q&A
Thank you! Contact us anytime

- Kari Thatcher
  - kthatcher@nccadv.org; 919. 956. 9124, ext. 219
  - www.nccadv.org

- Corey Root
  - croot@orangecountync.gov; 919. 245. 2496
  - www.ocpechnc.com

- Megan Raymond
  - M Raymond@ifcmailbox.org; 919. 967. 1086
  - www.ifcweb.org