A Team Approach to Trauma Informed Care

TEAMWORK
IN A NUTSHELL
What we will be discussing

- Review of Trauma, the Impact of Trauma, and Trauma Informed Care
- Being an advocate for children
- Promoting and supporting trauma-focused assessment and treatment for children and youth
- Partnering agencies and providers with youth and families
- Partnering within agencies and systems that interact with children and families
What is Child Trauma?

- Witnessing or experiencing an event that poses a real or perceived threat
- The event overpowers the child’s ability to cope
- Can you name some situations that can be traumatic?
Types of Trauma

- Acute Trauma
- Chronic Trauma
- Complex Trauma
- Historical Trauma
- Neglect
- Child Traumatic Grief
- Medical Trauma
Effects of Trauma

• Impact of potentially traumatic event is determined by both:
  o The objective nature of the event
  o The child’s subjective response to the event

• Something that is traumatic for one child may not be traumatic for another
Effects of Trauma

- Attachment
- Biology
- Mood regulation
- Dissociation
- Behavioral control
- Cognition
- Self-concept
- Development
- Overwhelming emotion
- Mental health issues
Trauma Informed Care

In a trauma informed system, those participating in the system:

• Understand the impact of trauma
• Can integrate that understanding into caring for the child
• Understands his or her role in caring for the child

“The experience of abuse or neglect leaves a particular traumatic fingerprint on the development of children that cannot be ignored if the child welfare system is to meaningfully improve the life trajectories of maltreated children.”

Being an Advocate for Children
I would feel like I was just being passed around and not really knowing what was going on. No one explained anything to me.

I didn’t even know what rights I had . . . if I had any.

No one told me what the meaning of foster care was. No one told me why I had been taken away from my mom. I knew there were bad things going on, but no one really explained it to me.

- Luis

Trauma-Informed Advocacy

- Help others to understand the impact trauma has had on your child
- Promote the importance of psychological safety
- Share strategies for helping your child manage overwhelming emotions and problem behaviors
- Support the positive, stable, and enduring relationships in the life of your child
- Help others to appreciate your child’s strengths and resilience
- Advocate for the trauma-specific services your child needs
- Know when you need support
Helping Your Child Heal

- **Know** when your child needs help
- **Learn** about trauma-focused assessment
- **Understand** the basics of trauma-informed therapy
- **Ask questions** if you are not sure that the therapy is working
When to Seek Help

When you:
• Feel overwhelmed

When your child:
• Displays reactions that interfere with school or home life
• Talks about or commits acts of self-harm (like cutting)
• Has trouble falling asleep, wakes up often during the night, or frequently has nightmares
• Complains of frequent physical problems but checks out okay medically
When to Seek Help

When your child:

- Asks to talk to someone about his or her trauma
- Talks over and over again about the trauma or seems “stuck” on one aspect of it
- Seems plagued by guilt or self-blame
- Expresses feelings of helplessness and hopelessness
Advocacy in Action
(Group Activity)

Help your team member understand:

- What child traumatic stress is
- How trauma has affected your child
- Your child’s strengths and resiliency
- What your child needs
Working as a Team

The team members in a child’s life:
• Share a commitment to the child’s safety, permanency and well-being
• Have distinct roles and responsibilities
• Relate to the child in different ways
• Are NOT equally trauma informed
Working as a team
Who are the team members?

- Child
- Foster Parents
- CASA
- Case Manager
- Case Worker
- Counselor
- Psychologist
- Psychiatrist
- Guardian Ad Litem
- Others?
Whose job is it anyway?
Foster Parent – Job Description

The goal of foster care is to provide for the physical, emotional and social needs of children in a "substitute" family setting - a foster home - until the biological family can be reunited or a permanent placement plan can be implemented.
Foster Parent - Responsibilities/Duties

• Provide a safe and comfortable home
• Provide for the child's basic physical and emotional needs
• Provide for school attendance, monitor progress, note special needs and accomplishments
• As safety allows, help the child maintain a relationship with his/her family in cooperation with case worker
• Assist the child in preparing to return home or being moved to an adoptive home.
• Provide recreational and enrichment activities
Foster Parent - Responsibilities/Duties

- Maintain a record for the child of his/her time in foster care, development milestones, photographs, report cards, etc
- Keep the agency informed of problems and progress
- Be available for meetings with social workers
- Cooperate with agency workers to implement plan for family reunification or permanent placement
- Cooperate with the visitation plan
- Help the child maintain an emotional bond and involvement with his/her biological parents and extended family members
CASA Volunteers – Job Description

- A CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) is a trained citizen volunteer appointed by the Juvenile Court to ensure that the needs and interests of abused or neglected children are being met.
- To serve as an arm of the Juvenile Court as a researcher, monitor and child advocate.
Case Manager – Job Description

- Case managers supervise the performance of contracted caregivers
- Maintain quality care for each youth or family
- Assess families for initial and ongoing licensure
- Match child needs with caregiver skills
- Monitor and document progress towards goals
- Plan transitions for discharges
- Maintain good working relationships with other agencies and organizations
Case Manager – Responsibilities/Duties

- Provide ongoing supervision of licensed contracted caregivers
- Receive and evaluate referral materials regarding children or families in need of placement
- Plan and supervise the pre-placement and placement for the youth/family
- Organize, facilitate, and document results of meetings
Case Manager – Responsibilities/Duties

- Provide consultation to caregivers both individually and in groups
- Coordinate community resources
- Maintain, collect, review and submit documentation and reports
- Advocate to promote the well-being of youth/families
Case Worker – Job Description

- Case Workers provide advanced social work in an attempt to keep families together and children safe
  - Stressful
  - Challenging
  - High burnout and turnover rates
Case Worker – Responsibilities/Duties

- Client Visits
- Discussions with Families
- Teamwork
- Working with Abusers
- Locate Resources and Help Clients Change
- Work Within Time Constraints
- Provide Empathy and Contextual Understanding
Counselors – Job Description

- Counselors care for the mental health needs of children in a foster care.
- Counselors will usually serve the whole family, rather than singling out the individual child, and will often be responsible for a caseload of several families.
- Counselors are also responsible to assist during crisis situations.
Counselor – Responsibility/Duties

- Meet with families in home or other settings
- Assessment of child’s needs and problem areas during placement
- Working with children who need intensive intervention related to adjustment after placement
- Family therapy (with both foster parents as well as birth families), group therapy
- Develop interventions for special needs children
- Work with educational and other professionals involved in the child’s life
Psychologist – Job Description

• Deals with the psychological issues of children of different ages
• Performs various duties in matters dealing with the psychological development of a child
• Conduct testing and diagnosis of children in care
Child Psychologist – Responsibilities/Duties

- Study the mental and psychological development of children
- Child counseling
- Diagnosis and treatment of speech difficulty
- Help a child overcome his/her limitations
- Treat childhood learning disabilities
- Research on child development issues
- Counsel the whole family to help them adapt to the child with problem and help the child get well
Psychiatrist – Job Description

• Deals with the psychological issues of children of different ages
• Performs various duties in matters dealing with the behavioral and psychological issues with children that are due to chemical imbalances in the brain
• Testing and diagnosis of children and mental health needs
Psychiatrist – Responsibilities/Duties

• Perform psychiatric evaluation, medication support services and complex case consultation
• Delivers Mental Health Services to children in foster care
• Assist in crisis intervention
Guardian Ad Litum - Job Description

- A Guardian Ad Litum (GAL) represents the rights of children and advocates for the child’s best interest in all court proceedings.
- The GAL solely represents the child’s interests, ensuring the emotional and physical safety in a stable, supportive home life that encourages health and proper development.
Guardian Ad Litem - Responsibilities/Duties

- Advocate for child’s best interest
- Investigate and collect information that helps develop recommendations for the court
- Facilitate communication and shares information between all involved participants
- Monitoring the entire court process and attends all court proceedings
Know Your Child’s Team

- Legal team
- Caseworker
- Resource parents
- Educators
- Therapist
- Birth parents
- Other birth family members
- Medical team

Strong, positive connection
Weak connection
Stressful connection
Thinking About My Child (Group Activity)

- Who are the **key players** in your child’s life?
- How can you **work together more effectively** to help your child?
- How might **using your “trauma lens”** change the way you work with other team members or with the child’s birth parents?
- How might you involve the child or youth in making decisions about their services?
Partner with Youth and Families

- Youth and families should be given choices and an active voice in decision-making on an individual, agency, and systemic level.
- Youth and family members who have been in the system have a unique perspective and can provide valuable feedback.
- Partnerships with youth and families should occur at all levels of the organization.
Partnering with Youth and Families in Services

Benefits:

- Empowers youth and families who have been disempowered by trauma
- Builds trust
- Enhances the helping relationship
- Promotes youth and family buy-in
- Improves quality of services and fit with family’s needs
- Increases placement stability and timely permanency
- Builds family decision-making skills

Family Partnership Pyramid

Family Partnership
Goal: Partner with families by valuing and utilizing their input on par with the providers within agencies. Families have equal voice and input into processes that may continue after they have left services.

Family Involvement
Goal: Involve families at every step of the service delivery and evaluation process.

Family Engagement
Goals: Engage Families in services & improve service utilization.

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Partner with Agencies and Systems That Interact with Children and Families

- Child welfare agencies need to establish strong partnerships with other child- and family-serving systems.
- Service providers should develop common protocols and frameworks.
- Cross-system collaboration enables all helping professionals to see the child as a whole person, thus preventing potentially competing priorities and messages.
- Collaboration between the child welfare and mental health systems promotes cohesive care and better outcomes.
Service Planning – Group Activity

Needs
Strengths
Weaknesses
Resources and Providers
Plan
Coordinate
Communicate
Plan Review and Update
Activity Wrap Up

• What Needs, Strengths, and Weaknesses did you identify?
• What Resources and Providers...
  • did you identify as available?
  • did you identify as needed?
• What is your Plan?
• How is the child or youth involved?
• How will your team Coordinate and Communicate?
• What is your Plan for Reviewing and Updating as needed?
Go Team!
Thank you!