

Trauma-Sensitive Schools

A NCSSLE Online Learning Event

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Safe Supportive Learning
Engagement | Safety | Environment

Welcome!



Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Project Prevent Grantees

Elementary and Secondary School Counseling Grantees

Online Learning Event

May 25, 2016

Gwen Willis-Darpoh



Kathleen Guarino





- **This is a “Listen-Only” online event.**
- **Opportunities to participate include:**
 - Polling questions
 - Chat box
- **Shared materials will be emailed and posted online within a week after the event is over.**

If you are having any audio or other issues, please contact ncssle@air.org and we will be happy to assist you.



1 Introduction to trauma

2 Why are schools addressing trauma?

3 What are trauma-sensitive schools?

4 How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



How would you describe your level of understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff?

- High level of understanding
- Moderate level of understanding
- Very little understanding



- Please share your learning goal for attending the online learning event today in the participant chat box.

Introduction to trauma



Introduction to trauma



- Definition of trauma
- Prevalence of childhood trauma
- Types of trauma
- Impact of trauma



What is trauma?



- Overwhelms ability to cope.
- Causes intense reactions that include fear, helplessness, and loss of control.
- Alters how we view ourselves, others, and the world around us.
- Based on our experience of the event.
- Comes in many forms.



How would you describe your level of awareness of the rates and types of trauma in the lives of the students in your schools?

- High level of awareness
- Moderate level of awareness
- Very little awareness

Introduction to trauma

Prevalence of trauma



- **In community samples, more than two thirds of children in the U.S. report experiencing a traumatic event by age 16, such as a serious accident, natural disaster, or experiencing or witnessing violence.**
- **Approximately two out of three children have been exposed to violence, crime, and abuse in their homes or communities.**
- **49% of youth experienced two or more types of victimization.**
- **More than 1 in 10 youth report 5 or more direct exposures to violence.**

Citation 1, 2



Types of traumatic experiences



Acute Trauma: Event that occurs at a particular time and place and is usually short-lived. Examples include: a natural disaster that affects a school or community; a serious accident; the sudden loss of a student or school staff member; or one-time experience of violence such as an assault or a school shooting.

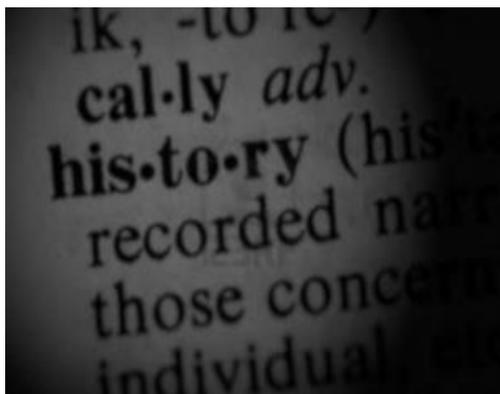


Chronic Trauma: Experiences that occur repeatedly over long periods of time. Examples include: chronic abuse or neglect; on-going domestic or community violence; chronic bullying; long-term illness; chronic homelessness; forced displacement; chronic exposure to poverty and deprivation; and on-going experiences of oppression or racism.

Citation 3



Types of traumatic experiences



Historical Trauma: The collective and cumulative trauma experienced by a particular group across generations still suffering the effects. For example, the negative effects of violent colonization, dislocation, and assimilation policies like forced placement in boarding schools on American Indian and Alaska Native communities can be seen in struggles with violence, suicide, substance abuse, and a distrust of the education system. For People of Color, experiences of slavery, segregation, racism and discrimination can lead to mistrust of systems, including schools, the need for self-protection, and even feelings of low self-worth or aggression. School staff may not always share the cultural backgrounds or collective histories of a diverse body of students, but learning how the legacy of trauma and healing influences students in the present is critical

Citation 4



Types of traumatic experiences



Complex Trauma: The term complex trauma refers to trauma that: 1) begins in childhood during key stages of development; 2) continues over time; 3) often occurs within a child's family where their primary caretaker is either a source of threat or unable to support, nurture, or protect a child from threat; and 4) leads to immediate and long-term difficulties in many areas. Examples include chronic interpersonal violence in the form of physical, emotional, and sexual abuse or witnessing domestic violence, as well as ongoing neglect and other forms of violent victimization or loss without adequate adult support to manage these experiences.

This type of trauma has particularly negative effects on relationship-building, behavior, and learning in school.

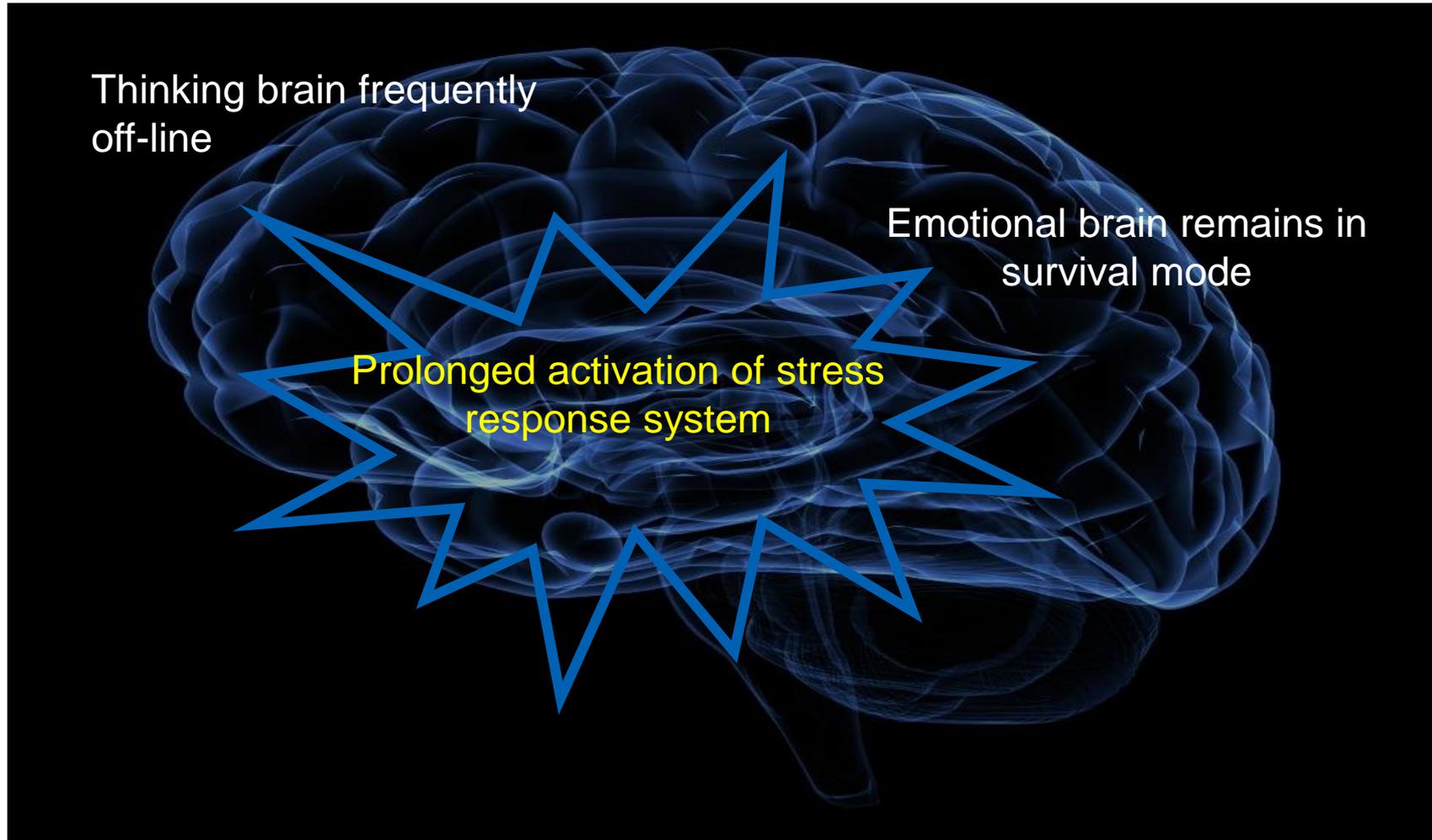
Citation 5

Introduction to trauma

Impact of trauma



Toxic stress response





Impact of complex trauma

- Smaller brain size and structures
- Difficulty identifying, expressing, and managing feelings
- Extreme responses ranging from anxiety and anger to appearing numb and disconnected
- Increased behavioral issues and risk-taking behaviors such as self-harm and substance abuse.
- Difficulties with attention, learning, and memory
- Difficulty trusting others and forming healthy relationships
- Increased risk for mental health issues
- Low self-esteem and poor self-image
- Focus on surviving at the expense of future thinking
- Increased risk for other system involvement

Why are schools addressing trauma?



Why are schools addressing trauma?



- The impact of trauma on schools is significant.
- There is increased risk of harm to all when trauma is overlooked.
- Schools play a critical role in fostering resilience.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on schools



Impact of trauma on students



- Physical symptoms such as headaches, stomachaches, and decline in self-care.
- Intense feelings of fear, anxiety, and concern for their safety throughout the school day.
- Difficulty identifying and controlling feelings while at school.
- Angry or aggressive outbursts in the classroom or other school spaces.
- Desire to withdraw from peers and teachers.
- Difficulty paying attention and learning.
- Trouble building positive relationships with peers and school staff.
- More time out of class.
- Increased absences.
- Increased risk of failing, poor test scores.
- More likely to be suspended or expelled for behavioral issues.
- Higher rates of referral to special education.

Think about . . .



- How you see trauma affecting students in your schools.
- Which students exposed to trauma are referred for additional support in your schools.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on schools



Impact of trauma on parents and guardians

- Similar difficulties to youth, such as difficulty identifying and managing emotions and controlling behaviors that may be seen in responses to school staff.
- Difficulty trusting and building relationships with school staff that impacts their child's ability to trust school staff and maintain these connections.
- increased risk for a number of challenges including substance abuse, depression, and PTSD that negatively impact parenting and can affect children's behaviors at school.
- Trouble managing stress related to their child's difficult behaviors, especially if they remind them of their own difficulties or experiences in childhood.
- Feelings of embarrassment, shame, fear, or guilt about their child's behaviors or needs that may trigger reminders of other traumas and lead to negative interactions with schools.
- Mistrust of school staff or the education system.

Think about . . .



- How you see trauma affecting parents and guardians of students in your schools.
- How you support parents/guardians who experience trauma.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Impact of trauma on schools



Impact of trauma on school staff

- **Direct exposure to trauma:** School staff may bring their own histories of trauma to their work or experience trauma on the job, for example, being threatened or assaulted or witnessing violence in school, such as a school shooting or loss of a student or colleague. Adults will handle these situations differently on factors such as their experience of the event, history of trauma, and level of coping and support.
- **Secondary Traumatic Stress / Compassion Fatigue:** Teachers who work with highly traumatized students are at risk of being indirectly traumatized as a result of hearing about their students' trauma and witnessing its negative affects. Symptoms may include: increased anxiety and concern about personal safety; intrusive, negative thoughts or images related to their students' traumatic stories; and a desire to avoid people or situations that trigger these difficult thoughts and emotions.
- **Vicarious Trauma:** Changes in an educator's inner experience over time as a result of responsibility for an empathic engagement with traumatized clients. Includes: increased difficulty leaving work at work; irritability with co-workers and students; diminished energy and patience; poorer work performance; and doubts about capabilities and impact.

Think about . . .



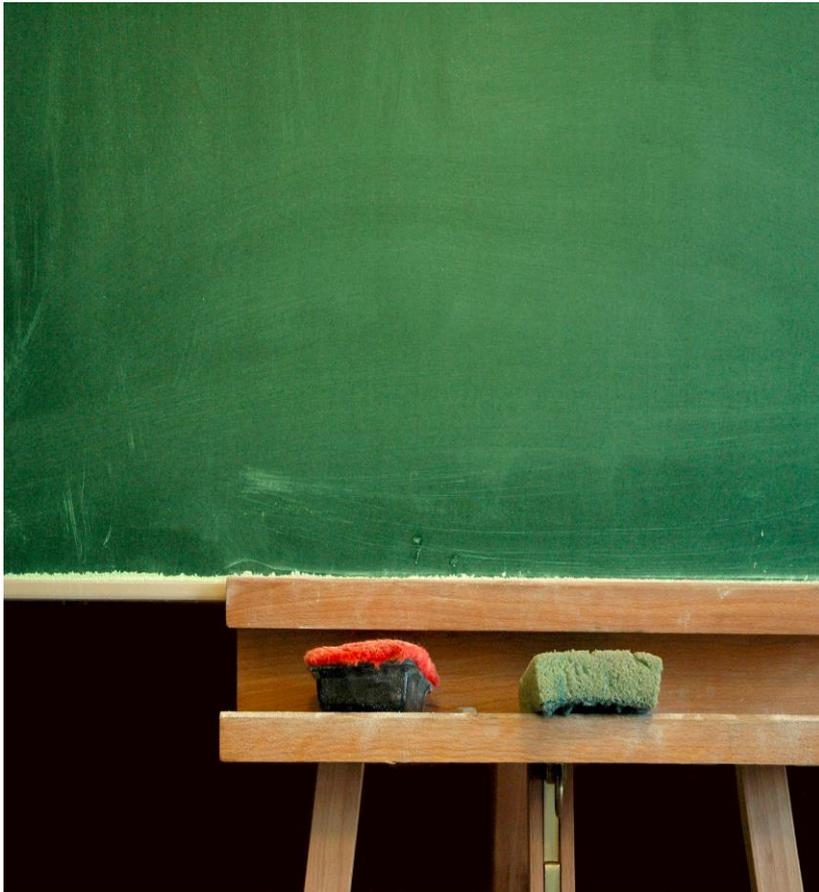
- How trauma may be affecting school staff.
- What support is available to staff who have experienced trauma, either directly or indirectly.
- What follow-up is available for staff.

Why are schools addressing trauma?

Increased risk of harm



Impact of trauma on school culture and conditions for learning



- Students exposed to trauma are more likely to escalate and act out.
- Adults may become increasingly crisis-driven, reactive, and punitive to maintain control.
- Difficult to maintain a safe environment most conducive to learning.
- Adults may misunderstand and mislabel student behaviors.
- Schools risk re-traumatizing students by creating environments and situations that mirror or replicate other trauma that students have experienced (e.g., harsh, punitive discipline, disrespectful interactions, chaotic environments).

Let's chat



Feel free to use the chat box to share 1-2 examples of how you see trauma impacting students, parents, and/or school staff in your schools or districts.

You may even have your own personal experiences to draw from.



Resilience

Schools can protect children from the negative impact of stress.

Protective factors that buffer the impact of stress include:

- Healthy, supportive relationships with caring adults.
- Learning environments that are safe, engaging, and supportive.
- Strong social and emotional skills such as problem-solving, self-awareness, self-regulation, and relationship skills that can be supported in school settings.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?



What are trauma-sensitive schools?



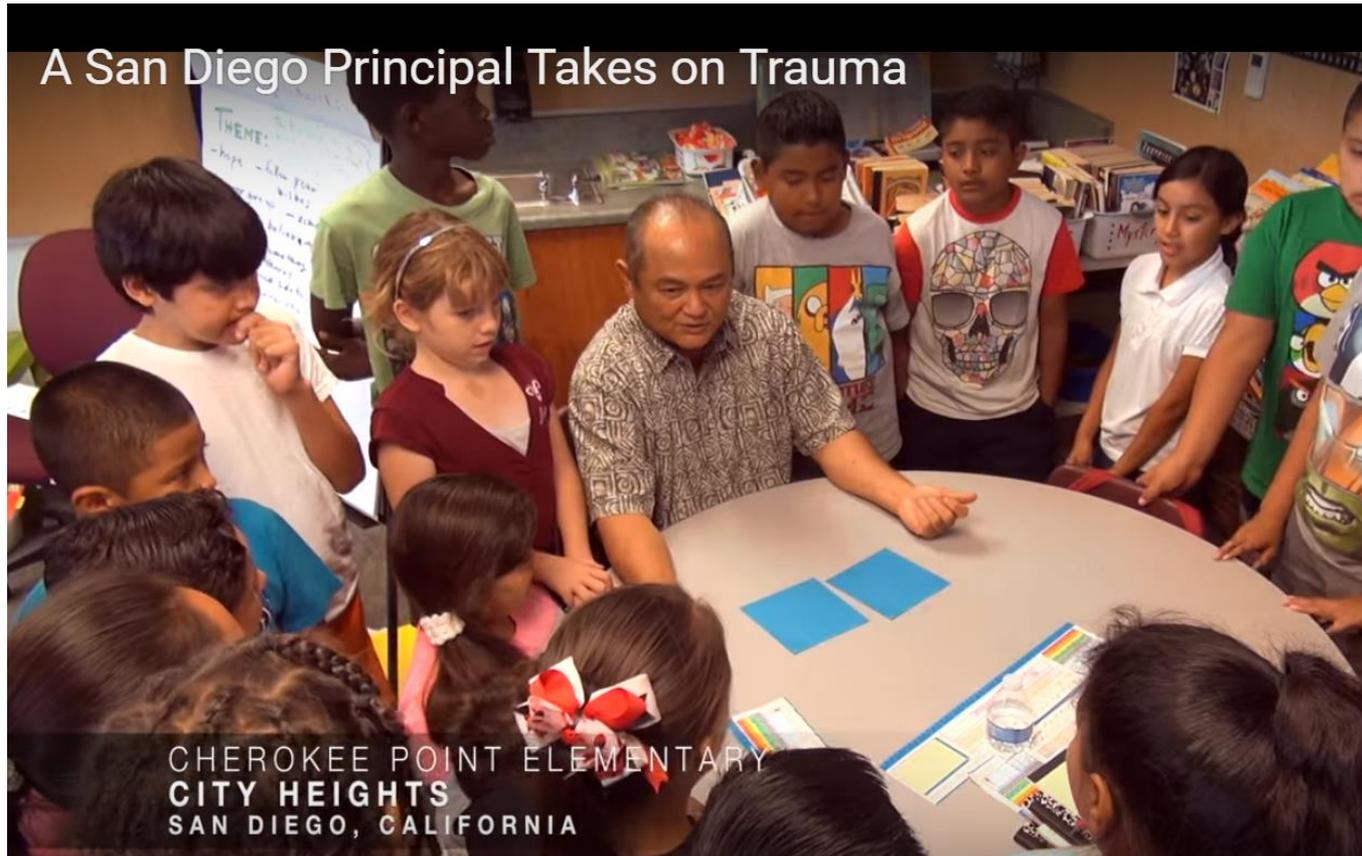
- Definition trauma-sensitive schools
- Core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach
- Shifting perspectives

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Video



5 minute video: *A San Diego Principal Takes on Trauma*



<https://youtu.be/dcvQb9e-VLI>

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Definition of trauma-sensitive schools



Definition

“A trauma-sensitive school is one in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported, and where addressing trauma’s impact on learning on a school-wide basis is at the center of its educational mission.”

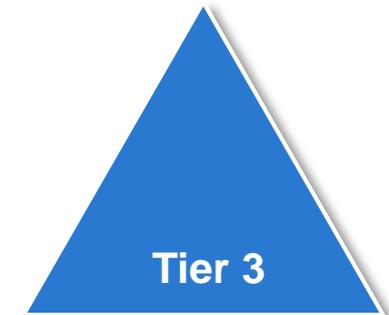
Cole et al., 2013

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Definition of trauma-sensitive schools



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and Trauma Sensitivity



Individualized, trauma-specific mental health services (e.g., Cognitive Behavioral Therapy in Schools).

Targeted services for some students exposed to trauma and at risk for further impact (e.g., Trauma-Focused Coping in Schools).

Tier 1
Trauma Sensitivity

Universal approach to addressing trauma that ensures all aspects of the school environment are informed by an understanding of trauma and designed to foster safety, resilience, mitigate impact, and support healing, whether trauma occurred at or outside of school.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Definition of trauma-sensitive schools



A universal approach

- Ensures support for all.
- Enhances the identification of students who need additional services.
- Creates an environment more likely to support and sustain Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions (e.g., therapeutic supports, counseling).
- Supports and adds to other efforts with shared principles and complimentary practices (e.g., restorative practices, positive behavioral supports, social and emotional learning, school emergency planning).

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Core principles



Core principles of trauma-sensitive schools



- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for cultural competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.



Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are easiest to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for culture competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.



Which core principles of a trauma-sensitive school are the most difficult to uphold day-to-day?

- Understand trauma and its impact.
- Believe that healing for students happens in safe, supportive, positive relationships among and between staff, students, and families.
- Ensure physical and emotional safety.
- Support choice, control, and empowerment for students, staff, and families.
- Strive for culture competence.
- View students holistically.
- Use a collaborative approach across staff, and between staff and students and families.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Shifting perspectives



Shifting perspectives from traditional to trauma-sensitive

Traditional Perspective

- Student's challenging behaviors are the result of individual deficits (e.g., what's wrong with you?)
- Understands difficult student behaviors as purposeful and personal.
- Focuses on changing the individual to "fix" the problem.
- Adults need to uphold authority and control with students and families.
- Punitive discipline works.
- Support for students exposed to trauma is provided by counseling professionals.

Trauma-Sensitive Perspective

- Students challenging behaviors may be ways of coping with a traumatic experiences.
- Understands difficult student behaviors may be automatic responses to stress.
- Focuses on changing the environment.
- Adults need to offer flexibility and choice to students and families.
- Positive reinforcement works.
- Support for students exposed to trauma is the shared responsibility of all staff.

What are trauma-sensitive schools?

Shifting perspectives



Scenario: Comparing perspectives

Scenario: Joseph, a student, arrives to school late and looks unkempt and tired. When he enters his first period class, he puts his head down on the desk. The teacher asks him to sit up and respond to a math problem she has put on the board. He refuses to comply with her request. He gets out of his seat, kicks over the trash can and a chair, curses at his teacher, and slams the door behind him as he leaves the classroom without permission.



- Please share in the chat box what a “traditional” response to this scenario might be.



- Please share in the chat box what a “trauma-sensitive” response to this scenario might be.



How difficult is it for a school to shift from a traditional to a trauma-sensitive perspective?

- Very difficult.
- Somewhat difficult.
- Not difficult at all.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?



- Panel discussion
- *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package*
- Core domains of trauma sensitivity
- Next steps for leaders
- Examples of trauma-sensitive goals

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Panel



Panel

Connie Pohlgeers, Campbell County Schools, Alexandria, Kentucky

Dena Radtke and Kimberly Merath, Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



NCSSLE Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package

Understanding Trauma and Its Impact

- Navigable PDF.
- Designed for all school staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff).
- Slides and script for an introduction to presentation that can be used by leaders for professional development.

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for school leaders.
- Offers leaders a vision for what universal trauma-sensitivity looks like and a process for implementing this approach.

Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Online, self-paced module.
- Designed for all staff (e.g., teachers, administrators, student services and support staff).
- Offers specific strategies for how staff in different roles can help to build a trauma-sensitive school using activities and discussion questions.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package



Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools Module

Prepare

- Build knowledge.
- Establish infrastructure.
- Assess readiness.

Imagine

- Envision your trauma-sensitive school.
- Use framework to organize your vision across 6 key domains.

Align

- Align with other approaches (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, social emotional learning, emergency planning).
- Integrate efforts.
- Revisit readiness.

Sustain

- Evaluate impact.
- Adjust to changing needs of the school community based on student population and types of trauma experienced.
- Sustain systemic changes.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Core domains



Six core domains of trauma sensitivity

- 1 Support Staff Development
- 2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment
- 3 Assess Needs and Provide Services
- 4 Build Social and Emotional Skills
- 5 Collaborate with Students and Families
- 6 Adapt Policies and Procedures

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Next steps



Next steps for leaders

Step One

- Identify a group that is invested in leading this process (trauma work group).
- Review all training package components.
- Plan for how to use training components with staff.

Step Two

- Educate staff.
- Solidify a multidisciplinary working group (may include new staff post-training).
- Assess readiness for change.
- Explore how this aligns with other efforts.
- Consider how to evaluate impact.

Step Three

- Assess current practice across 6 core domains.
- Get input from all staff.
- Identify areas for goal setting in the work group (may be one domain at a time).
- Develop a plan for monitoring progress on goals .



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample readiness questions

Readiness = Motivation x General capacity x Specific capacity

- How is a trauma-sensitive approach different than what is already in place universally to support students?
- To what extent does trauma sensitivity add value to existing practices and approaches?
- How difficult will it be to implement a trauma-sensitive approach school-wide?
- How well does the school currently operate?
- How supportive is the leadership to trying new things?
- How receptive is school staff to change?
- What knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to become a trauma-sensitive school?
- Who in the school will lead the process and champion trauma-sensitivity?



How ready do you believe your school or district is to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?

- Very ready. The investment of time, resources, and energy is there.
- Somewhat ready. People see the need and want to invest but are not at the point where they have organized themselves around a process.
- Not ready. More work is needed to see the value and be willing to invest in the process.
- Other. Please specify in the chat box.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

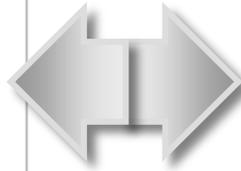
Next steps



Linking vision and practice: Trauma-sensitive classrooms and schools

Whole School

- There is joint agreement across staff about the need for a trauma-sensitive approach.
- Goal setting involves all staff.
- Whole school vision and mission helps support classroom strategies.



Classroom

- Changes to policies and procedures are enacted at the classroom level.
- Staff continually provide feedback on successes and challenges.
- Trauma-sensitive classrooms support and reinforce whole school vision.

How do you become a trauma-sensitive school?

Sample goals



Sample Goals Across Key Domains

- 1 Support Staff Development
- 2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment
- 3 Assess Needs and Provide Services
- 4 Build Social and Emotional Skills
- 5 Collaborate with Students and Families
- 6 Adapt Policies and Procedures



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

1

Support Staff Development

- All staff has a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff.
- Staff engages in ongoing learning about trauma sensitive practices.



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

2 Create a Safe and Supportive Environment

- Adults keep all areas of the school building safe, and staff looks for and minimizes potential triggers in the environment.
- All crises intervention and prevention practices integrate trauma sensitivity.



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

3 Assess Needs and Provide Services

- All school-based screening and assessments consider the potential impact of trauma.
- All plans consider ways to address trauma.



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

4 Build Social and Emotional Skills

- Schools integrate universal strategies to teach and model for students how to regulate emotions and behave in prosocial ways.
- Students learn about how stress and traumatic stress affect them through a formal curriculum.



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

5 Collaborate with Students and Families

- Students and families are given a voice to express concerns.
- Schools work with students and families to maintain a trauma-sensitive approach.



Leading trauma-sensitive schools: Sample goals

6

Adapt Policies and Procedures

- Discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma.
- Policies and practices are reviewed regularly to ensure full alignment with the mission and goals of a trauma-sensitive school.



- *In one sentence*, please share in the participant chat something that you can do in your role to apply what you have learned to help support a trauma-sensitive approach.

- Any questions? Please also share in the participant chat box.



Thank you for participating in today' s OLE!

- A link to a recording of today' s session and slides will be available on the NCSSLE Website. We will also email the slides to you.
- If you have additional questions about implementing programs or strategies, contact your technical assistance specialist.
- If you have grant administration questions, please contact your Federal Project Officer(s).

Next NCSSLE Training Events



Date	Events
May 31	P2 Community of Practice
June 2	P2/ESSC Online Learning Event on Information Sharing Among Schools and Community Agencies
September 19	P2 ESSC Online Learning Event on Adapting Discipline Codes

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