

VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR A TRAUMA INFORMED SYSTEM OF CARE

NEW JERSEY DIVISION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION SERVICES

“...early experiences help to determine brain structure, thus shaping the way people learn, think, and behave for the rest of their lives.”

-I Am Your Child; Reiner Foundation



Organizational culture reflects what the system and organization considers important:

- what warrants attention,
- how it understands the people it serves and the people who provide that service,
- and how it puts these understandings into daily practice.

“A trauma-informed approach incorporates three key elements:

1. realizing the prevalence of trauma;
2. recognizing how trauma affects all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce;
3. and responding by putting this knowledge into practice.”

Trauma-Informed services must be based on:

- principles,
- policies, and procedures
- that provide safety, voice and choice,
- *in every part of a system and/or agency, including administration, and management.*

The service delivery system needs to be assessed and modified to incorporate Trauma-Informed principles into practice.

What Does Trauma Informed Service Delivery Mean in New Jersey?

- There is attention to trauma in policies and practices,
- There is safety and empowerment for staff and for service recipients

Trauma informed services do no harm

What Does Trauma Informed Service Mean in New Jersey?

- Each of us embraces a message of optimism and hope that recovery is possible.
- Trauma survivors are individuals who have experienced extreme situations and have managed as best they could.



Trauma informed services do no harm

I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.



- Maya Angelou

Trauma Informed Practice uses a strengths-based framework which is founded on five core values...

1. Emotional and physical safety for all – staff and service recipients.
2. Trustworthiness: Clear and consistent policies, honest service delivery with program-appropriate boundaries.
3. Choice: Activities offer service users choices and control.
4. Collaboration: Inclusive approach instead of a top-down hierarchical model.
5. Empowerment: Self-esteem and skill building.

When an organization can say that its **culture** reflects those 5 values in each *contact, physical setting, relationship, and activity*; in both the experiences of staff as well as consumers, then the culture is trauma-informed.

(Roger D. Fallot, Ph.D. and Maxine Harris, Ph.D.; July, 2009)

DMHAS GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

The following Guiding Principles are useful across all prevention and intervention services, settings, populations, and levels of care; and are of the utmost importance in working with people who have had traumatic experiences:

1. Value: safety

- “Do no harm.” Trauma sensitive and compassionate care is given from initial contact.

Principles of Safety

- create a safe environment.
- using evidence based tools, provide universal routine screenings for trauma.
- develop strategies and use evidence based practices to address secondary trauma and promote care for care-givers.

Movement Toward *Safety*

- Safety is generated by honest and compassionate communication and with a sense that crises are handled as a team.
- Staff members, and peer support specialists, expect organizations to be responsive to, and maintain safety within treatment, and within the environment.
- Universal screening guides treatment planning; and provides a steady reminder to be watchful for past traumatic experiences and their potential influence on interactions and engagement with services across the continuum of care.
- Trauma workers are integral in developing informal and formal agency practices and procedures to prevent and address secondary trauma.

2. *Value: trustworthiness*

- The system provides care with the least amount of risk for re-traumatization.

Principles of trustworthiness:

- Demonstrate organizational and administrative commitment to TIC
- Minimize the risk of re-traumatization or replicating prior trauma dynamics
- Use of evidence based practices.

Movement Toward *Trustworthiness*

- Trauma specific strategies will be embraced across the entire service delivery system to create trauma-informed services.
- We anticipate and respond to potential practices that may be perceived or experienced as re-traumatizing.
- We forge new responses to specific situations that trigger a trauma-related response, and can provide alternatives to an element of treatment that may be problematic.

3. Value: choice

- Individuals have input into decisions made in treatment, and that input is taken seriously.

Principles of *Choice*:

- Support the autonomy of service recipients in exploring options and having input into treatment, decisions and transitions throughout all levels of care.
- Participation opportunities are created.

Movement Toward *Choice*

- We view each individual we serve as the expert in their own lives and current struggles, emphasizing that consumers and providers can learn from each other.
- Our services focus on developing self-care skills, coping strategies, supportive networks, and a sense of competence.

4. *Value: collaboration*

- Create relationships and participation to increase consideration of the individual element of choice

Principles of *collaboration*:

- Recognize that trauma-related symptoms and behaviors originate from adapting to traumatic experiences
- Promote trauma awareness and understanding through the use of trauma related treatment practices.

Movement Toward *Collaboration*

- Our identification and classification of symptoms and behaviors will shift from a “pathology” mindset to one of resilience.
- We will maintain a trauma-aware environment through ongoing staff training, continued supervisory and administrative support, collaboration and consumer participation, trauma-responsive program design and implementation, as well as organizational policies and practices that reflect accommodation and flexibility in attending to the needs of individuals affected by trauma.

5. Value: empowerment

- Promoting resilience; providing opportunities and understanding that individuals are competent and capable to grow and heal.

Principles of *empowerment*:

- Use a strengths-focused perspective.
- Provide hope—recovery is possible.
- Foster trauma-resistant skills throughout the provision of treatment.
- Identify recovery from trauma as a primary goal.

Movement Toward *empowerment*

- Projecting an attitude that recovery is possible, viewing individuals as competent to make changes, providing opportunities, and normalizing discomfort or difficult emotions as manageable.
- Language is person centered, hopeful and empowering.
- A strengths-based, resilience-minded approach: allowing trauma survivors to acknowledge and appreciate their strength, and the behaviors that help them to survive.

The Starfish

While walking along a beach, an elderly gentleman saw a young man lean down, pick up a starfish and throw it gently back into the ocean.

“Good morning! May I ask what you are doing?”

The young man paused, looked up, and replied:

“Throwing starfish into the ocean. The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them back, they’ll die.”

“But, there are miles of beach and hundreds of starfish! You can’t possibly make a difference!”

The young man smiled, bent down, picked up another starfish, threw it back into the ocean and said:



“It made a difference for that one.”