

TRAUMA-SENSITIVITY AND SCHOOLS

Washington State determined that 13 out of every 30 students in a classroom will have toxic stress from 3 or more traumatic experiences. Those children are likely to be more “unruly”, more “unmotivated” or more absent than the others.

Source: Washington State Family Policy Council

When Lincoln High School implemented a trauma-informed approach to students, suspensions dropped by 83 percent and expulsions dropped by 40 percent in the year following implementation.

Source: *Unlocking the Door to Learning: McInerney, Esq. Senior Staff Attorney & McKlindon, Amy, M.S.W. (December, 2014) Trauma-Informed Classrooms & Transformational Schools.* Education Law Center.

“We’re not trying to lower the bar for kids with trauma, but we have to make sure that we’re giving them tools so that they can learn. We have to make sure they have adults they can count on, who aren’t going to hurt them, who’ll be there to support their process, who will meet them where they’re at and build from there.” says Natalie Turner, Washington State University Area Health Education Assistant Director.

Source: Stevens, Jane Ellen. (August 20, 2013) *There’s no such thing as a bad kid in these, Spokane, WA, trauma-informed elementary schools.* ACEs Too High News

For more information on the National Council for Behavioral Health’s Trauma-Sensitive Schools services contact Sharday Lewis at ShardayL@TheNationalCouncil.org.



TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS RESOURCES



THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

www.thenationalcouncil.org

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES SURVEY

www.acesurvey.org

THE NATIONAL CHILD TRAUMATIC STRESS NETWORK

www.nctsn.org

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

www.dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health/trauma

TRAUMA LEARNING AND POLICY INITIATIVE

www.traumasensitiveschools.org

STATE OF WASHINGTON OFFICE OF SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION: The Heart of Learning and Teaching, Compassionate Schools

www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/default.aspx

THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRAUMA AND LOSS IN CHILDREN

www.starr.org/training/tlc

UCSF HEARTS Program:

Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools

www.coe.ucsf.edu/coe/spotlight/ucsf_hearts.html



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UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA & TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS:

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO HAVE TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL?



WHAT DOES TRAUMA MEAN?

Trauma occurs when a child experiences an intense event that threatens or causes harm to his or her emotional and physical well-being. (National Child Traumatic Stress Network: http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/what_is_child_traumatic_stress_0.pdf)

Some examples of traumatic events or circumstances include:

- Physical, emotional or sexual abuse
- Parent with mental health and/or addiction issues
- Childhood neglect or abandonment
- Violence (Witnessing or being the victim of domestic assault/street crime)
- Parent who has been incarcerated
- Discrimination and poverty



HOW DOES TRAUMA IMPACT LIFE AND LEARNING?

- Trauma exposure can impact the brain in such a way that learning is more difficult
- Students impacted by trauma have difficulty trusting adults because of their previous experiences
- Students can be activated/triggered if staff do not understand their needs
- Students can be re-traumatized by exclusionary discipline and restraint if staff do not understand their needs
- Students are focused on their own safety and self-protection

A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL INCLUDES



- Safe, calm and secure environment with supports for all students and staff
- System-wide understanding of trauma, its prevalence and impact
- System-wide understanding of trauma-sensitive school practices
- Cultural competence and cultural humility
- Promotion of student and family voice, choice and self-advocacy
- Student-centered and trauma specific supports and services
- Healing, hopeful, honest and trusting relationships



Traumatic experiences greatly impact a child's journey through school. A child impacted by trauma may experience physical ailments, intrusive thoughts and fears, and decreased attention and concentration, all which impact learning. But there is hope in trauma sensitive-schools. Educators implementing trauma sensitive practices are seeing decreases in suspensions and office referrals and increases in attendance, student engagement and academic success. We can't ignore these children; all schools should be trauma-sensitive. ”

Linda Rosenberg, President & CEO, National Council for Behavioral Health

TRAUMA-SENSITIVE EDUCATORS

- Create safe and supportive learning environments for all students
- Build trusting relationships with all students
- Ask students “what do you need?” rather than “what is wrong with you?”
- Teach all students social and emotional skills
- Provide classroom movement and mindfulness exercises
- Work to build resilience skills in all students
- Address behavior with positive and compassionate strategies

NATIONAL COUNCIL'S SEVEN DOMAINS OF A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL



DOMAIN 1 – Student Assessment:

Become aware of trauma-related needs throughout the existing multi-tiered process of student assessment.

DOMAIN 2 – Student, Family and Guardian Involvement

Involve and engage student, family/guardian and community partners. Include student, family/guardian and community partners in school improvement efforts and multi-tiered student assessment/interventions.

DOMAIN 3 – Trauma-Sensitive Educated and Responsive District and School Staff

Increase the entire staff's trauma-sensitive school awareness, knowledge and skills.

DOMAIN 4 – Trauma-Informed, Evidence-Based and Emerging Best Practices

Increase student support staff's knowledge and skills to deliver evidence-based services that address the effects of trauma exposure.

DOMAIN 5 – Safe and Secure Environments

Increase the awareness, knowledge and skills of school staff to create safe, trusting and healing environments.

DOMAIN 6 – Community Outreach and Partnership Building

Assume a leadership role in educating and engaging community partners and parents in trauma-sensitive schools practices.

DOMAIN 7 – Ongoing Performance Improvement and Evaluation

Ensure a system is in place to measure performance in each domain. Track, analyze and review data to identify ongoing challenges and/or reinforce progress.