

Multnomah County Trauma Informed Practice

Conference and Brainstorm Results

December 19, 2011

What?

The following pages are a compilation and synthesis of the feedback provided by conference participants. Over 200 people attended the conference on the 19th. Those that were able to stay to the end helped develop the comprehensive attached lists.

How?

The feedback and ideas were organized into themes: trauma awareness, meeting with clients, cultural considerations and improving systems.

Who?

The feedback was also organized by discipline. For example, the “Child Welfare” sections in the following pages is a list of ideas provided by child welfare professionals for child welfare professionals.

Why?

There is a wealth of information about therapy/treatment with trauma survivors. However, information about how other disciplines might incorporate trauma informed principles is still an emerging field. The following pages represents a local body of knowledge, developed by over 80 participants.

So what?

Whenever appropriate and possible, please review and utilize these ideas in your offices and agencies.

Child Welfare

- Families may have anxiety about being in contact with DHS.
- Be mindful of the situations that brought families to DHS.
- Be calm and consistent.
- Remember that not all DHS hotline reports are true.
- Relationships with clients are critical.
- Be careful of first impressions. Get to know the family first.
- Listen to people's experiences.
- Have a current list of trauma programs.
- Be careful about doing research on families prior to first visit.

Clinicians & Therapists

- Generate discussion about trauma with friends and colleagues.
- Discuss trauma during check-ins with case managers.
- Explain processes (what, why, etc)
- Psychoeducation about trauma.
- Interrupt people when they say, "you need to make the client do all the work."
Challenge that statement based on trauma-informed understanding.
- Be transparent without using the word "transparent."
- Model trauma-informed care in my professional and personal lives (non-pathologizing language and questions).
- Be a more sensitive and trauma structured therapist. Normalize and predict possible trauma experiences.
- Don't make assumptions. Know the person, not just the behavior.
- Consider trauma may be impacting client's motivation. Ask, "what do I need to understand?"

Legal Professionals

- Be conscientious how our systems and processes (formality of court, etc) may impact trauma survivors.
- Share information on past dependency matters on youth now in delinquency system.
- Realize what I do to trigger trauma reactions.
- Use language that does not re-traumatize, victimize or blame.
- Focus on positives—understand that one missed meeting does not mean non-compliance.
- Avoid judging a parent who may have experienced trauma. Focus on needs of children.

Trauma Awareness

*"What happened to you?" rather than
"What's wrong with you?"*

Supervisors, Policies & Procedures

- More skilled trauma informed trainings.
- More planful collaboration with partnering agencies.
- Continue to advocate that we have courageous conversations.
- Provide more opportunities for clients to advocate and make decisions re: their future/treatment.
- Hire qualified professional social workers.
- Create consistent yet flexible environment.
- Change dynamic of family decision meetings.
- Aware of effect on staff and resources to train and support.
- Create guidelines for using trauma informed practices.

Corrections

- Take risks and challenge other and self to understand trauma and triggers.
- Build rapport.
- Keep child/client/person informed of process, next steps, plan.
- Explain your role to clients and what they can expect.
- Do not put people into a one size fits all box.
- Address offender's previous victimization when addressing offending behavior.
- Address the awareness and related trauma to myself.
- Engage and recognize system level oppression and allow for youth's involvement in decision making.

Service Providers

- Be aware of how timelines can trigger clients.
- Be more transparent with youth. Slow down.
- Not be so hard on my [client] for not visiting her child in foster care. The traumas she experienced are getting in the way.
- Be more understanding of the trauma experienced by my clients while presenting workshops.
- Help officers and detectives understand the impact of trauma on victims/clients while investigating crimes.
- Be mindful of where I refer clients to ensure use of trauma informed practices.
- Welcoming environment.
- Build relationships. Empathy and understanding.
- Be aware for the real issue at hand and not assume that the family/client is uncooperative.

Child Welfare

- Be better prepared when meeting with families by doing as much research on the family as possible.
- Be better prepared with history prior to going out on a call.
- Do not take prior family history of prior worker knowledge of perception of a family at face value. Engage family on their level and don't go into an interview with a family with biased opinions.
- Have more meetings in homes and in the community.
- Listen to people's experiences and help them develop a plan.
- When staffing cases with workers, listen to placement crises and interject when possible about how trauma might be impacting the child.

Supervisors, Policies & Procedures

- Engage and challenge co-workers/providers to pause before assuming defiance or lack of motivation.
- Regularly remind staff that we work with trauma victims.
- Share information with whole team about trauma.
- Work with team to develop strategies to better serve clients/youth.
- Incorporate trauma lens into all case staffing.
- Keep trauma informed care a standing agenda item when discussing cases.
- Hold meetings with staff to discuss use of trauma-informed techniques and approaches.
- Practice not closing cases when youth loses interest. Stay engaged.
- Reduce unnecessary rules.

Meeting with Clients

Preparing for and holding meetings, sessions and court hearings

Emerging trauma-informed themes:

*“What happened to you?”
rather than “what’s wrong
with you?”*

*Meet in the community as
much as possible.*

*Be thoughtful during client
contact of possible trauma
reactions.*

*Trauma reactions do not
mean non-compliance.*

Legal Professionals

- Even if no PTSD diagnosis, find out what happened in past, recent past and what's currently happening to client.
- Have detailed discussion about what to expect at court (who will be there, where they will sit, what their roles are, what will be discussed, possible outcomes).
- Read past reports and information on clients in order to be sensitive to trauma and how I structure meetings.
- Use language that does not re-traumatize clients.
- In court, use language that is sensitive to human nature (for example refer to the mother in a case as Ms. _____ rather than just “mom” or “mother”).

Corrections

- Build rapport (trauma is recovered via relationship).
- Be consistent yet flexible.
- Get background information: How long in custody? How often? How will I appear to client? How does client appear to cope?
- Keep child/client/person informed of processes, next steps, plan.
- Talk to youth and parents about family history.
- Ask youth what they would like help with. Request that the family work together.
- Explain to families what to expect and share your role.
- Address offender victimization history when addressing offending behavior.
- Require youth to participate in multi-disciplinary meetings for service planning.

Clinicians & Therapists

- Share information with others who work in my program and brainstorm ways we can incorporate what we learn about trauma informed care.
- Consider trauma may be affecting lack of motivation on the client's part.
- Be more trauma informed during intake.
- When a client needs excessive redirection, go over trauma and symptoms of trauma as a way to give power back to the client.
- Process things with clients and co-workers based on trauma-informed ideas.
- Courage to invite accountability: to be the "voice" of the child who has experienced adverse childhood trauma.
- Speak from the "heart." Strike a balance between cognitive and "heart" experiences. Be accessible to clients, others and self in a heartfelt way.
- Narrate and explain why you're doing it.
- Affirm victimization but remind client they don't have to be victims.
- Model trauma-informed care practices at work and home.
- Ask clients non-pathologizing questions about their experiences and being clear and transparent as much as possible.
- Be more directive in session when appropriate.
- Be aware and empathetic when clients are reacting to trauma and not assume the client is being difficult.
- Make clients aware of how trauma affects people.
- Advocate for traumatized clients during DHS meetings, court hearings, etc.
- Provide services in the community.
- Take time to repeat information.

Meeting with Clients (continued)

*Preparing for and holding meetings,
sessions and court hearings*

Emerging trauma- informed themes:

*"What happened to you?"
rather than "what's wrong
with you?"*

*Meet in the community as
much as possible.*

*Be thoughtful during client
contact of possible trauma
reactions.*

*Trauma reactions do not
mean non-compliance.*

Service Providers

- Engage and challenge co-workers/ providers to pause before assuming defiance or lack of motivation.
- Regularly remind staff that we work with trauma victims.
- Share information with whole team about trauma.
- Work with team to develop strategies to better serve clients/youth.
- Incorporate trauma lens into all case staffing.
- Keep trauma informed care a standing agenda item when discussing cases.
- Allow clients to set tone for disclosing information and requesting services.
- Build rapport and connection.
- Understand that clients may be having a trauma reaction when they do not welcome my intervention.
- I will be more patient when I need to repeat information for youth and families.
- Focus on relationship, empathy and understanding.
- Inform clients what and why you are doing.
- Meet people where they are.
- Be informed and ask questions.
- Listen for cues that may indicate trauma.
- Listen more and interview with respect of possible traumas.
- Give clear information about the impact of past trauma on current situation.
- Ask client to help me understand their background.
- Explain how the court process works and all of the players and their roles.

Child Welfare

- Be mindful and respect people's cultural differences.
- Be understanding of your own biases.
- To be more mindful when screening and input appropriate information regarding the family's cultural identity and preferences.

Supervisors, Policies & Procedures

- Collect client history prior to face to face meeting. It is very important in the Native community to know who is related to whom.
- Continue to advocate that we allow for opportunities for courageous conversations.
- Solutions must include community voice—my job is to help make sure community is at the table.
- Educate all involved on history, its impact and how we can move forward and make change.
- Offer more training to staff to provide greater understanding.
- I will seek opportunities to reframe language I hear from other professionals to focus on the link to a client's trauma history.

Corrections

- Understand and embrace the history and why/how it impacts people then and now.
- Challenge structure, system, etc (tell the other story).
- Engage and recognize system level oppression and allow for youth's involvement in decision making.

Clinicians & Therapists

- I can continue to bring up the concept of trauma history and wonder aloud how that impacts their behavior currently. This could increase awareness and sensitivity among my co-workers and support the agency's trauma sensitivity.
- To open up conversation with clients about intergenerational trauma, historical trauma, institutional and structural trauma.
- Invite conversation and dialogue. Be willing to engage in challenging conversations about inequality, racism and oppression.

Cultural Considerations
Oppression and institutionalized racism is a form of trauma

Emerging trauma-informed themes:

Enduring institutionalized racism is traumatic.

Encourage open, honest and courageous conversations about racism and oppression.

Legal Professionals

- Learn the client's individual story as related to her race, family history, cultural and structural environment. Do not fit her in a convenient box that does not fit her circumstances.
- Increase awareness of the outcomes and impacts of historical trauma when working with families and children involved with child welfare.
- Through non-threatening dialogues, facilitate "courageous conversations" regarding race and child welfare.
- Obtain the "Knowing Who You Are" training.

Service Providers

- I will try to learn more about historical trauma and how that affects people.
- Continue traditional teaching—cultural is prevention.
- Share both sides of the story.
- Learn more about what is needed so that policies don't create strategic imbalance/disparities in our communities.
- Address and push for education to include all sides of historical fact, even those facts that do not put dominant culture in the greatest light.
- Make others aware of cultural differences that may appear inappropriate behaviors to others due to the lack of knowledge.
- Provide cultural education to professionals, service providers and parents.
- I will also bring the cultural training I do as an item to discuss with providers and staff.

Legal Professionals

- Have a discussion about visitation at prelims:
 - Parents decompose at possibility of not seeing children (can lead to relapse).
 - Bring in family and friends for supervision.
 - One visit a weeks is not enough.
- Certification of family members:
 - Black/white policy on criminal background history.
 - Need to assess on case by case basis.
 - Legislative solution.
- Parenting classes are not useful for most parents. Must be tailored to individual. Hands-on parenting most useful.
- Funding scheme needs to prevent removal and placement changes and instead fund in-home services.
- Independent Living Programs need to be re-evaluated—too difficult for teens to follow procedures.

Clinicians & Therapists

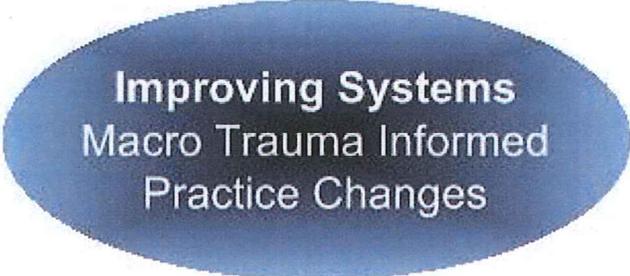
- Create environment where we all feel and know we are accountable and responsible to invite change on a system level.
- We need a policy which will increase clarity of what is required to do for parents who lost custody of their kids.
- Examine orientation process at JDH, especially that the first 24 hours are to place youth in isolation.

Child Welfare

- Have supervisors available after hours to help with certain situations.

Corrections

- More immediate response to requests for help, especially cases of discipline when client/detained youth is in disagreement with the view of the situation. Work with management.
- Immediate explanation to new youth of the legal process, particularly the prelim system. Work with staff and JCCs.
- Educate administration and advocate for trauma informed policies and procedures.



Improving Systems Macro Trauma Informed Practice Changes

Service Providers

- Improve "new" staff training so all workers at group homes and residential placements are aware about trauma-informed care.
- Attend yearly trainings to keep staff educated on current policies.
- Incentive programs for employees who stay longer. Policy changes to increase funding. Employees must gain something for long term commitment to direct practice agencies.
- Encourage professionals in positions of power to take into consideration that clients experience various traumas throughout their lives and they cannot be reversed within short time span and the law should reflect that and grant families equal opportunity to have their family reunited.
- Document issues that need to be addressed on a case by case basis so that corrective behaviors can be implemented.

Supervisors, Policies & Procedures

- Trainings for staff on trauma informed care.
- Hire qualified social workers.
- Change family decision meeting dynamic.
- Aware of effect on staff and resources to train and support.
- Encourage staff and clients to have the courage to share experiences as a way to validate/normalize/communication with life experiences.
- Train family workers on trauma informed care.
- Create/revise guidelines for practice that incorporates trauma informed principles.

Emerging trauma-informed themes:

Add a trauma informed lens to policies and practices.

Invest in trauma informed care and vicarious trauma training for workers, management and administration.

Enhance program structures to include awareness of trauma and vicarious trauma.