



**How Being Trauma-Informed Improves Criminal
Justice System Responses**

Activity Packet

Version 4.0

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Program Description

Policy Research Associates, Inc. (PRA), is known nationally for its work in regard to people with behavioral health needs involved in the criminal justice system.

Overview

Although prevalence estimates vary, there is consensus that high percentages of justice-involved women and men have experienced serious trauma throughout their lifetime. The reverberating effects of traumatic experiences can challenge a person's capacity for recovery and pose significant barriers to accessing services, often resulting in an increased risk of coming into contact with the criminal justice system.

Objectives

How Being Trauma-Informed Improves Criminal Justice System Responses is a training program for criminal justice professionals to:

- Increase understanding of trauma
- Create an awareness of the impact of trauma on behavior
- Develop trauma-informed responses

Trauma-informed criminal justice responses can help to avoid re-traumatizing individuals, and thereby increase safety for all, decrease recidivism, and promote and support recovery of justice-involved women and men. Partnerships across systems can also help to link individuals to trauma-informed services and to treatment for trauma.

Program Length

- Half-day

Program Participants

This highly interactive training is specifically tailored to community-based criminal justice professionals including:

- Community corrections (probation, parole, and pre-trial services officers)
- Court personnel
- Police

Contact Us for More Information

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MODULE 1

Video Activity: The Cycle of Violence

In this video scene, people talk about childhood experiences and the resulting violence in their lives.

While Viewing the Video: Think about the following; jot down notes for discussion below

- In the stories, how was the violence cyclical?
- How was violence a response to victimization? That is, how did fighting help?
- How did violence keep the individuals safe and help them survive?

Discussion:

Violence often stems from victimization; violence can be cyclical.

MODULE 2

Group Activity: Traumatic Events

Trauma is precipitated by powerful life events. In this activity we will explore the kinds of events that people might experience as traumatic, to help us explore, “What Is Trauma?”

- Think of different types of traumatic events that you have experienced, witnessed, or heard about
- Working as a small group, quickly brainstorm a list of the kinds of powerful life events that might result in trauma
- Using the post-it notes, write one traumatic event on each post-it using markers
- When instructed, post your group’s post-it notes under the appropriate heading on the easel charts

Draft List of Traumatic Events

People react differently to powerful events; some experience trauma while others do not.

MODULE 2

Video Activity: Officers Talk About Trauma

Criminal justice professionals are not strangers to potentially traumatic events. They work in high-risk jobs. Many serve or have served in the armed forces.

In this next video, we will hear from a police officer who experienced a brutal attack (Officer Tully) and a probation officer (Officer Morales) who was attacked in her office. They will each describe the *event*, how they *experienced* it, and the kinds of short- and long-term *effects* they experienced.

While Viewing the Video:

- Pay close attention to how the officers experienced the attacks and the effects that it had on them

- In the space below, jot down words or phrases the officers use to describe trauma

- When instructed, report out

Trauma = Event / Experience / Effects

MODULE 3

Video Activity: Trauma's Effects

To look more closely at trauma's effects, we will hear from several people who have trauma histories and who have been involved in the criminal justice system. They will be discussing their experiences with the effects of mental health issues, engaging in high-risk behaviors, and substance abuse and their relationship to trauma. For many, these effects have lasted many years beyond the traumatic event or set of experiences.

Instructions

While viewing the video:

- Think about:
 - If you were observing these individuals while they were experiencing the effects, what do you think it would look like? What might be the behavioral manifestations?
 - What role does substance misuse/abuse play in the person's life?
 - How might these behaviors be problematic from a criminal justice perspective?
 - How might these behaviors be linked to prior criminal justice system involvement?
- Record your thoughts and list any specific behaviors, words, and phrases that stand out to you in the space below.

What behavioral manifestations may take place due to the traumatic experiences described?

What role does substance misuse/abuse play in the person's life?

How might these behaviors be problematic from a criminal justice perspective?

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After viewing the video, discuss the following:

- If you were observing these individuals while they were experiencing the effects, what do you think it would look like? What might be the behavioral manifestations?
- What role does substance misuse play in the person's life?
- How might these behaviors be problematic from a criminal justice perspective?
- How might these behaviors be linked to prior criminal justice system involvement?

Remember:

- Trauma symptoms and symptoms of other mental illness overlap; it can be difficult to assess
- Behavior = coping; people find ways to survive
- Survival strategies may lead to justice involvement
- Substance use is a common way for people to cope with trauma

MODULE 4

Group Activity: Individual Differences

In this activity, we will explore the differences between individuals. Why do some individuals experience an event as traumatic, while others do not?

- Definitions of resilience and risk.
 - Resilience: an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change
 - Risk: a combination of individual, relational, community and societal factors that contribute to manifesting a negative outcome
- Work in your small groups.
 - “Resilience” Group(s) -- Discuss and list specific factors that may make an individual resilient in the face of powerful life events.
 - “Risk” Group(s) -- Discuss and list specific factors that may put an individual at a higher risk of experiencing the effects of powerful life events as trauma

As directed, write your items either on post-its or in the space below and be prepared to report out.

Large Group Discussion:

- Representatives from each group should be prepared to comment on the items listed

<u>Resilience Factors</u>	<u>Risk Factors</u>

Trauma is an individualized response.

MODULE 5

Video Activity: Trauma-Informed Responses

In this video we hear from Robert, a vet diagnosed with a combat trauma reaction. He describes an interaction with two police officers. We also hear from Teena, who talks about her experiences in court.

While Viewing the Video:

- Note how Robert describes his interactions with each of the two police officers
- Look for ways in which the officers use a trauma-informed approach with Robert
- List things Teena mentions about how the judge’s approach helped her

Robert’s Experience	Teena’s Experience

Large Group Discussion: *Be prepared to report out.*

- What officer behaviors were trauma-informed?
- What actions by the judge were trauma-informed?

Make a universal assumption of trauma. Respond with respect, information, safety and choice.

MODULE 6

Group Activity: How can the Criminal Justice System Re-Traumatize?

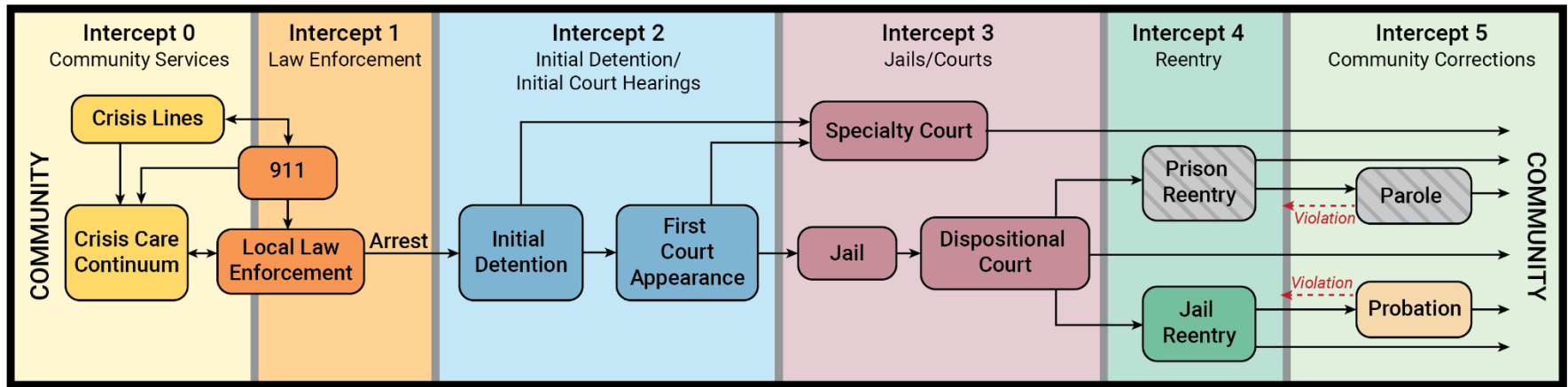
Sometimes, policies and procedures that guide our actions on the job are not trauma-informed. In this activity, we will take an opportunity to examine typical policies and procedures in the various intercepts of the criminal justice system. Clearly, there are some policies and procedures that are necessary for safety and cannot be changed. Our purpose is to identify where policies can be modified to be trauma-informed and where they cannot. Also, think about how these are carried out by individual criminal justice professionals. Is there room for discretion?

Instructions

- Using the Sequential Intercept Model, identify the intercept you work in most frequently (i.e. Intercepts 0/1, Intercepts 2/3, or Intercepts 4/5)
- Work in groups based on the intercept you've identified or to which you've been assigned
- Once in groups, brainstorm a policy or procedure relevant to your assigned intercept in the criminal justice system that relates to individuals you encounter
 - What does the process look like?
 - Are there elements of your portion of the justice system that could be re-traumatizing?
 - Where is there room for discretion on the part of individual criminal justice professionals?
- Discuss how/if the procedure or policy might affect someone with a trauma history; look at how it can be perceived as threatening, re-traumatizing, or trigger reactions
- Next, consider what aspects of the policy or procedure is mandatory and where there is room for discretion in how it is implemented; consider what can be done to make it trauma-informed
 - What would this policy or procedure look like if it were trauma-informed?
 - Where are areas where there is discretion for change?
 - How can you as an individual who works within the criminal justice system be more trauma-informed?
 - How can you apply what you've learned in the training?
- Record your thoughts for the activity on the chart on page 13
- In the third column record the trauma-informed changes you discussed for your identified policy or procedure

Reconsider policies and procedures to make them trauma-informed.

The Sequential Intercept Model (SIM)



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MODULE 6

Intercepts: __ Policy or Procedure	How Perceived as Re-traumatizing?	Trauma-Informed Approaches

MODULE 6

Optional Strategic Planning Activity

This training has provided you with an opportunity to better understand trauma and to be more aware of its impact. The next step is to apply this knowledge to your work.

- Consider discussing these ideas further with your colleagues
- Encourage your agency to develop strategies for developing and implementing trauma-informed policies and procedures

Discuss the key areas within each step in your agency/department. Brainstorm priorities that need to be addressed for each area. For each priority identified, brainstorm action steps needed to address the listed priorities using the charts on Activity Packet pages 15-24. Additional information regarding the ten items listed below can be found in SAMHSA's *Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (see Resources tab).

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Step 1: Review		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p>Governance & Leadership</p> <p>How does agency leadership communicate its support and guidance for implementing a trauma-informed approach?</p> <p>How do the agency's mission statement and/or written policies and procedures include a commitment to providing trauma-informed services and supports?</p> <p>How do leadership and governance structures demonstrate support for the voice and participation of people using their services who have trauma histories?</p>		

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Step 1: Review		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p style="text-align: center;">Policy</p> <p>How do the agency's written policies and procedures include a focus on trauma and issues of safety and confidentiality?</p> <p>How do the agency's written policies and procedures recognize the pervasiveness of trauma in the lives of people using services, and express a commitment to reducing re-traumatization and promoting well-being and recovery?</p> <p>How do the agency's staffing policies demonstrate a commitment to staff training on providing services and supports that are culturally relevant and trauma-informed as part of staff orientation and in-service training?</p> <p>How do human resources policies attend to the impact of working with people who have experienced trauma?</p> <p>What policies and procedures are in place for including trauma survivors/people receiving services and peer supports in meaningful and significant roles in agency planning, governance, policy-making, services, and evaluation?</p>		

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Step 1: Review		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p style="text-align: center;">Physical Environment</p> <p>How does the physical environment promote a sense of safety, calming, and de-escalation for clients and staff?</p> <p>In what ways do staff members recognize and address aspects of the physical environment that may be re-traumatizing, and work with people on developing strategies to deal with this?</p> <p>How has the agency provided space that both staff and people receiving services can use to practice self-care?</p> <p>How has the agency developed mechanisms to address gender-related physical and emotional safety concerns (e.g., gender-specific spaces and activities)?</p>		

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Step 2: Develop		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p>Engagement & Involvement</p> <p>How do people with lived experience have the opportunity to provide feedback to the organization on quality improvement processes for better engagement and services?</p> <p>How do staff members keep people fully informed of rules, procedures, activities, and schedules, while being mindful that people who are frightened or overwhelmed may have a difficulty processing information?</p> <p>How is transparency and trust among staff and clients promoted?</p> <p>What strategies are used to reduce the sense of power differentials among staff and clients?</p> <p>How do staff members help people to identify strategies that contribute to feeling comforted and empowered?</p>		

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Step 2: Develop		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p>Cross Sector Collaboration</p> <p>Is there a system of communication in place with other partner agencies working with the individual receiving services for making trauma-informed decisions?</p> <p>Are collaborative partners trauma-informed?</p> <p>How does the organization identify community providers and referral agencies that have experience delivering evidence-based trauma services?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place to promote cross-sector training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches?</p>		

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Step 2: Develop		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p>Screening, Assessment, Treatment Services</p> <p>Is an individual's own definition of emotional safety included in treatment plans?</p> <p>Is timely trauma-informed screening and assessment available and accessible to individuals receiving services?</p> <p>Does the organization have the capacity to provide trauma-specific treatment or refer to appropriate trauma-specific services?</p> <p>How are peer supports integrated into the service delivery approach?</p> <p>How does the agency address gender-based needs in the context of trauma screening, assessment, and treatment? For instance, are gender-specific trauma services and supports available for both men and women?</p> <p>Do staff members talk with people about the range of trauma reactions and work to minimize feelings of fear or shame and to increase self-understanding?</p> <p>How are these trauma-specific practices incorporated into the organization's ongoing operations?</p>		

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Step 3: Support		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p style="text-align: center;">Training & Workforce Development</p> <p>How does the agency address the emotional stress that can arise when working with individuals who have had traumatic experiences?</p> <p>How does the agency support training and workforce development for staff to understand and increase their trauma knowledge and interventions?</p> <p>How does the organization ensure that all staff (direct care, supervisors, front desk and reception, support staff, housekeeping and maintenance) receive basic training on trauma, its impact, and strategies for trauma-informed approaches across the agency and across personnel functions?</p> <p>How does workforce development/staff training address the ways identity, culture, community, and oppression can affect a person's experience of trauma, access to supports and resources, and opportunities for safety?</p> <p>How does on-going workforce development/staff training provide staff supports in developing the knowledge and skills to work sensitively and effectively with trauma survivors.</p> <p>What types of training and resources are provided to staff and supervisors on incorporating trauma-informed practice and supervision in their work?</p> <p>What workforce development strategies are in place to assist staff in working with peer supports and recognizing the value of peer support as integral to the workforce?</p>		

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Step 3: Support		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p>Progress Monitoring & Quality Assurance</p> <p>Is there a system in place that monitors the agency's progress in being trauma-informed?</p> <p>Does the agency solicit feedback from both staff and individuals receiving services?</p> <p>What strategies and processes does the agency use to evaluate whether staff members feel safe and valued at the agency?</p> <p>How does the agency incorporate attention to culture and trauma in agency operations and quality improvement processes?</p> <p>What mechanisms are in place for information collected to be incorporated into the agency's quality assurance processes and how well do those mechanisms address creating accessible, culturally relevant, trauma-informed services and supports?</p>		

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Step 3: Support		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p style="text-align: center;">Financing</p> <p>How does the agency's budget include funding support for ongoing training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches for leadership and staff development?</p> <p>What funding exists for cross-sector training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches?</p> <p>What funding exists for peer specialists?</p> <p>How does the budget support provision of a safe physical environment?</p>		

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Step 3: Support		
	Priorities	Action Steps
<p style="text-align: center;">Evaluation</p> <p>How does the agency conduct a trauma-informed organizational assessment or have measures or indicators that show their level of trauma-informed approach?</p> <p>How does the perspective of people who have experienced trauma inform the agency performance beyond consumer satisfaction survey?</p> <p>What processes are in place to solicit feedback from people who use services and ensure anonymity and confidentiality?</p> <p>What measures or indicators are used to assess the organizational progress in becoming trauma-informed?</p>		

Notes

For More Information



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