



Implement Trauma-Informed Approaches to Improve Patient Care

Overview

Many pregnant women with opioid use disorder (OUD) have experienced significant traumatic events, adversity, and toxic stress in their lives, including sexual abuse and other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Trauma refers to intense and overwhelming experiences that involve serious loss, threat, or harm to a person's physical and/or emotional well-being. These experiences may occur at any time in a person's life; they may involve a single traumatic event or may be repeated over many years. These traumatic experiences often overwhelm a person's coping capacity. In many cases, prescription and/or illicit opioid use begins as a coping mechanism to manage the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Why We Recommend this Best Practice

Trauma-Informed Care is a strengths-based service delivery approach "that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors, and that creates opportunities for survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment" (Hopper E, et al, 2009). Trauma-Informed Care acknowledges a patient's life experiences as key to improving engagement and outcomes while lowering unnecessary utilization. It changes the paradigm from one that asks, "What's wrong with you?" to one that asks, "What has happened to you?" Just as with "universal precautions" for infection control, Trauma-Informed Care necessarily assumes that every patient, and indeed every provider or staff person, has a history of traumatic stress.

Strategies for Implementation

Step 1: Review the [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center](#).

This resource, developed by the Center for Health Care Strategies with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, offers a one-stop information hub for health care providers interested in implementing Trauma-Informed Care. It houses the following:

- foundational content regarding the impact of trauma on health
- testimonials from providers who have adopted trauma-informed principles
- in-the-field examples illustrating how to integrate Trauma-Informed Care into health care settings
- practical strategies and tools for implementing trauma-informed approaches
- information for state and federal policymakers interested in supporting Trauma-Informed Care

Step 2: Review [SAMSHA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#).

This offers first steps to organizational assessment and development around the Trauma-Informed Care model of care. Identify how this model of care can be integrated into your current care model.

Step 3: Create a comprehensive organizational structure, whereby the entire workforce operates under a Trauma-Informed Care model, such as [The San Francisco Department of Public Health Workforce Training Model](#) and [The Sanctuary Model](#)

Step 4: Start to adopt new organizational and clinical practices that address the impact of trauma on patients and staff, including but not limited to:

- Lead and communicate about being trauma-informed
- Engage patients in organizational planning and shared decision making about treatments
- Train both clinical and non-clinical staff in trauma-specific approaches and build a trauma-informed workforce
- Create a safe physical and emotional environment
- Prevent secondary traumatic stress in staff
- Hold each other accountable
- Screen all patients for trauma
- Engage referral sources and partner organizations that are also trauma-informed

Resources:

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services. Treatment Improvement Protocol \(TIP\) Series 57. HHS Publication No. \(SMA\) 13-4801. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.](#)
- [Institute of Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care. Trauma-Informed Organizational Change Manual. Buffalo Center for Social Research. University at Buffalo, 2019.](#)
- [A Collaborative Approach to the Treatment of Pregnant Women with Opioid Use Disorders. SAMHSA.](#)
- [S.E.L.F.: A Trauma-Informed Psychoeducational Group Curriculum. The Sanctuary Model.](#)
- [Center for Health Care Strategies. Laying the Groundwork for Trauma-Informed Care.](#)
- [Compassion and Care: Supporting Women with Substance Use Disorders and their Newborns
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI3wXkqN-40&t=5s>](#)

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