

Historical Trauma

The Impact on Communities of
Color

Trainer's Guide

National Resource Center for Reaching
Underserved Victims

Men of Color Expert Working Group

Overview

The use of the Men of Color (MOC) Working Group materials are intended to create discussion on the trauma and victimization of men and boys of color and ways to better serve them. It's important to remember your goal is to get people to talk about trauma, victimization, and healing as opposed to debating right or wrong or get hung up on how we perpetuate the problem. Information will be new to a lot of people while extremely basic to others so in these types of mixed groups the conversation amongst the audience provides for the best type of learning. That can also mean conflict. Not that it is a bad thing, because conflict leads to learning, but it can be if not managed well. And for anyone facilitating groups and/or community presentations a little extra assistance in focusing and honing facilitation skills is always useful.

Learning Objectives

- To understand the history of colonization and the impact on people of color
- To understand how trauma that in the past still affects people of color today
- To identify ways to address historical trauma in our service delivery

Goals

The goal of this training is to understand historical trauma and how it affects communities of color today. This presentation is intended to provide an overview of historical trauma and how the events of the past became the roots of systematic oppression communities of color experience today. These systematic roots are embedded into societal norms, institutions (i.e. education, courts, social services) and shape the way people of color and men of color are viewed and treated; it also shapes the way our communities are conditioned for survival. In this presentation, we will make connections with the past to how we function on the present to identify where these issues stem from and discuss ways to address these as well as individual trauma.

Duration of Training

This training can be from 1 hour to 1.5 hours. The facilitator can choose how long activities will take and if they want to present all slides.

Intended Audience

- Practitioners working with boys and men of color
- Boys and men of color

Essential Knowledge of Historical Trauma

Historical trauma is the cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affect the individual exposed, but continue to affect subsequent generations. Starting in the 1960s, knowledge of historical trauma emerged from the stories of those who endured the Holocaust and its impact on subsequent generations, as well as the experiences of Japanese Americans placed in internment camps after World War II (Evans-Campbell, 2008; Sotero, 2006). Finding that these two groups had endured persistent mass trauma and that their children's mental health was affected was groundbreaking at that time and built the foundation for historical trauma research today. Currently much of the research and documentation is on Indigenous populations of North America (United States and Canada), however, we can link similarities to many groups across the globe who have been colonized and where war and religious assimilation are factors.

The difference between individual trauma and historical trauma is that the same events continue to affect a population time and time again and the population as a whole are more likely to experience negative behavioral health outcomes, as well as decreases in daily functioning and quality of life. The events of the past became the roots of systematic oppression communities of color experience today and are embedded into societal norms, institutions (i.e. education, courts, social services) and shape the

way people of color and men of color are viewed and treated. It also shapes the way our communities are conditioned for survival. However, we caution against assuming that every people in that population, Black, Jewish, or Native American, is affected in the same way or are adversely affected in the same way.

When looking at the adaptive behaviors of the past needed for survival, we also look at how those have become maladaptive behaviors of today. For example, whippings from slave owners became a normal, or stereotypical, method of parents now whipping their children. When first adapted it was a way of saving the children from the whip and strict behaviors were expected and if not complied with there was harsh punishment. The intent was to protect but over the course of generations it became a parenting technique. Black children are still at risk of other forms of institutional racism so the strict codes of behaviors in public to protect them from police, courts, and being institutionalized are passed along but the issues are less overt and we look at issues like "the prison pipeline" that starts with poor educational systems that then link kids into juvenile detention centers, and later into prisons where they act as modern day slaves performing tasks for governments and corporations for pennies on the dollar.

It is critical to understand that the health and wellbeing of a community is based on social, cultural, and economic factors. The impact of trauma and cumulative effects of historical trauma on communities of color are starting in a “one down” position. In order to address these factors we have to understand trauma and create trauma-informed institutions. Institutions can be comprised of well-meaning and caring individuals yet without policies and practices that empower workers with tools and resources to best help deal with trauma in individuals, we will continue to perpetuate the systematic oppression. We have to acknowledge the past in order to change the future.

Bibliography

“Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)”

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acesstudy/about.html>

“How Trauma Is Carried Across Generations: Holding the secret history of our ancestors.” Molly S. Castelloe, Ph.D. Published on May 28, 2012 in “The Me in We”

“Spotlight on Culture” Part one (Native American), 2013, The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

“Spotlight on Culture” Part two, (African American) 2013, The

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

“Spotlight on Culture” Part three, 2014, (Jewish, Japanese, Hawaiian, and API) The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

“Spotlight on Culture, Implementing Cultural Competence” 2014, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

“The school to prison pipeline, explained” Libby Nelson & Dara Lind 2015

“Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services, a Treatment Improvement Protocol, Tip 57” Chapter 3, Understanding the Impact of Trauma, SAMHSA
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK207191/>

“Trauma, Transgenerational Transfer and Effects on Community Wellbeing” Judy Atkinson, Jeff Nelson and Caroline Atkinson.

PRESENTER WALK-THROUGH

Material: video, computer with LCD projector and screen for PowerPoint functions, loose leaf paper

Welcome and introductions:

When getting started naturally you want to get everyone's attention before you welcome them and thank them for coming. Briefly state who you are and your connection with addressing trauma. Then ask each person to introduce themselves. If it's a smaller group you can add an introduction question, i.e. "State your name and what interested you about this presentation?" or one of the questions below.

Alternative questions:

- What's your definition of historical trauma?
- What are ways do you see traumatized by things that happened 100s of years ago?
- Why should we address historical trauma?

Overview:

You may read the following overview or paraphrase it using your own words to describe what will be covered today.

"Today we will be talking about historical trauma and how it

shapes the way institutions respond to communities of color. This presentation is intended to provide an overview of historical trauma and how systematic responses that were put in place many years ago continue to produce the same results for communities of color. We will also explore ways to address historical trauma in our personal lives and how we can dismantle institutions of oppression.”

Historical Trauma

The Impact on Communities of Color

This presentation was produced by the **Vera Institute of Justice** under Award # 2016-XV-GX-K015, awarded by the Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this presentation are those of the contributors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Workshop Objective

- To understand the history of colonization and the impact on people of color
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Historical Intergenerational Trauma

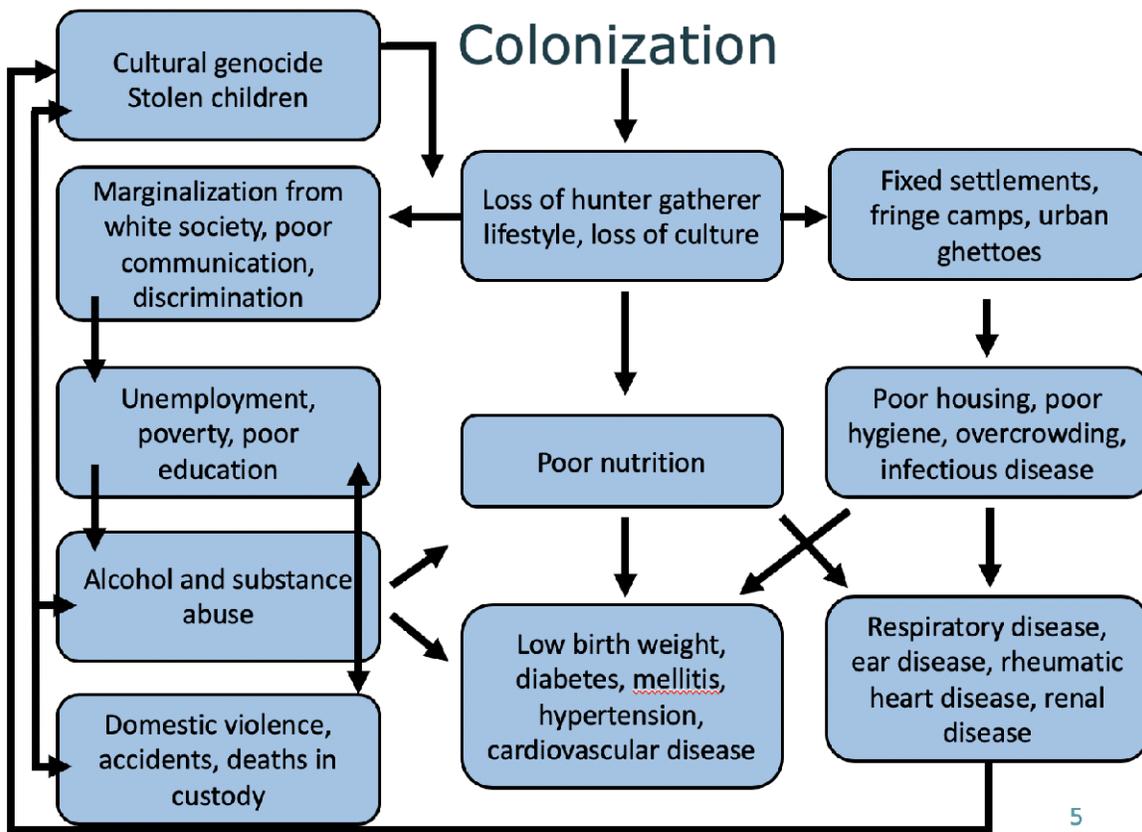
“An event or series of events perpetrated against a group of people and their environment, namely people who share a specific group identity with genocidal or ethnocidal intent to systematically eradicate them as a people or eradicate their way of life.”

Dr. Karina Walters 2012



3

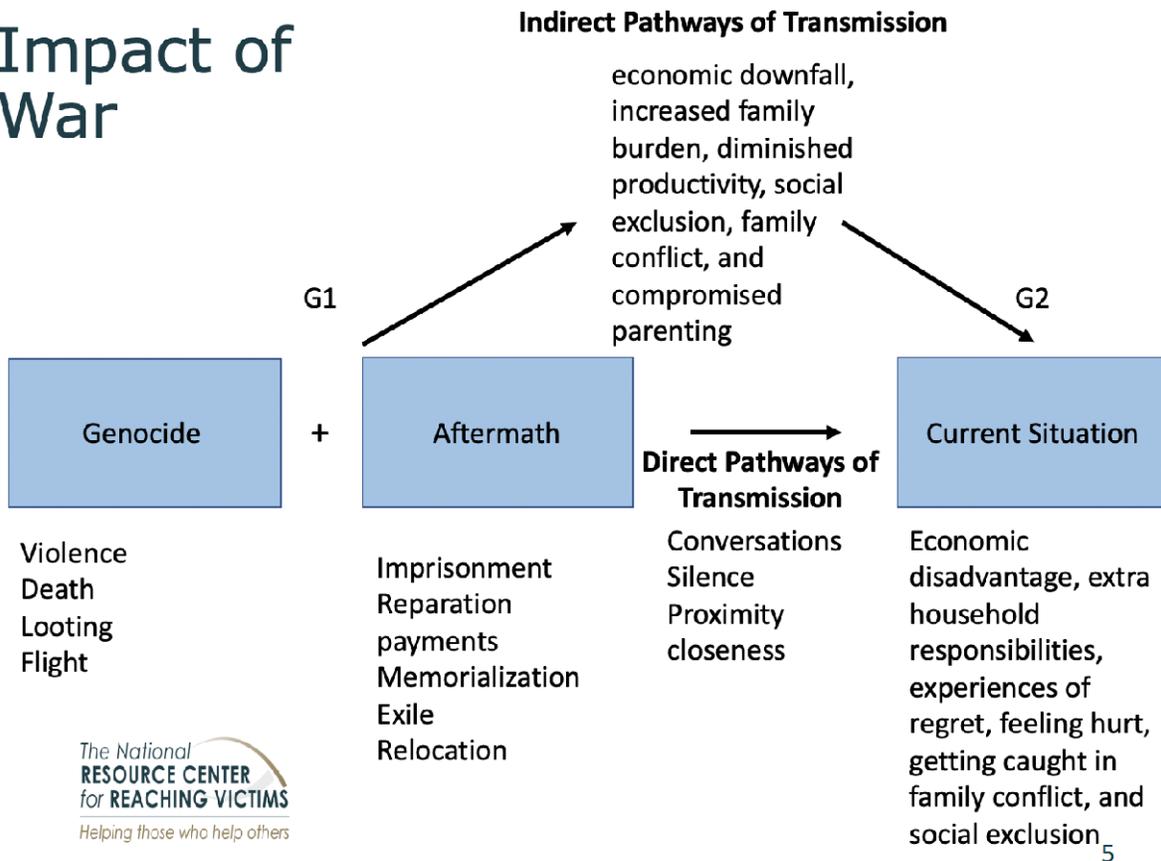
Beginning with a definition of historical intergenerational trauma will ground the audience. As the presenter, if you have a personal way of talking about historical intergenerational trauma, use your own anecdote or definition instead of reading this slide verbatim. It's more powerful for you to explain how you identify or connect with it.



5

This chart is an illustration of various events that occur after colonization started impacting groups of people around the globe, those impacted groups started to lose connection with their lifestyle and mobility became harder. The presenter can do a quick review of this chart or give time for audience members to glance at it. Make a connection to the notion that once you start losing one thing, you start losing other things.

Impact of War



This is another chart illustrating the impact of war. It can help explain the violence and maladaptive behavior we see today in communities. Historically, violence against women and sexual assault as rampant in war, when you wanted to annihilate a community you targeted the women. The aftermath of war, if you're a refugee, survivor, or you've assimilated, is grief and loss that directly and indirectly leads to a current state of economic disadvantage, experience of regret, feeling hurt, family conflict, and social exclusion as illustrated in the chart. One example of a direct result of war is native people who after war no longer had control of their land, and how this affected their

lifestyle and livelihood. Indirect results show how it has affected groups and individuals emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

How Do These Affect:

- Native Americans?
- African Americans?
- Holocaust survivors?
- Japanese internment survivors?
- Hispanics/Latinos?
- Asians?
- War refugees?
- Families experiencing intergenerational poverty?



6

We want to ask the audience to provide examples for each group. Articles contained in the bibliography provide examples in the event that audience members are unable to provide examples.

Manifestations May Include:

- Mistrust of health care, legal, and educational systems
- Higher rates of risk behaviors such as alcohol and drug abuse
- Mental health issues such as anxiety, depression, and suicide
- Violent behavior, homicide, and domestic violence
- Higher rates of chronic diseases



7

This is a list of manifestations of historical intergenerational trauma, including perceptions of institutions, coping behaviors, result of stressors, and perpetuation of learned behavior.

Historical Trauma

- Historical trauma is the cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affect the individual exposed, but continue to affect subsequent generations
- The untreated trauma in the parent is passed on to the child through the attachment process and implicit or explicit message about the world (i.e., relationship to self, safety)



8

Historical trauma is not a personal trauma history, it's a collective one that spans multiple generations.

Trauma Subtypes

- Cultural trauma is an attack on the fabric of a society, affecting the essence of the community and its members
- Historical trauma is the cumulative exposure of traumatic events that affect an individual and continues to affect subsequent generations
- Intergenerational trauma occurs when trauma is not resolved, subsequently internalized, and passed from one generation to the next
- Present trauma is what today's youth are experiencing on a daily basis



We blame youth for showing the symptoms of trying to survive in the violent world us adults fail to change for them"

Jeremy NeVilles-Sorell

9

Each bullet point is an explanation for the next. Cultural trauma (ex: Holocaust) explains historical trauma, which explains intergenerational trauma, and then its manifestations in present day trauma.

"I cannot be healed until my community is healed because each time something happens like a police shooting or another child murdered it re- triggers and reminds me of all the times that its happened in the past."

Trauma may result from:

- A direct, personal experience of an event
- Witnessing an event
- Learning about an event
- Being threatened with death
- Experiencing serious injury of self
- Experiencing threat to one's physical integrity
- The death, threat of death, serious injury, threat to physical injury of another



10

When we examine certain behaviors of irresponsibility and disobedience in youth like drinking, partying, or skipping school, we blame them for those things and aren't understanding why they are doing these things. There is a reason for their behavior, and it's a coping mechanism for the violence they experienced collectively, and as they transition into adults it doesn't change and remains unaddressed.

Not everyone is affected by historical trauma in the same way or understands it in the same way.

Some cautions about the concept

- It is NOT culturally safe to assume that everyone within a group or community or family has been impacted by historical trauma, or by the same experiences as others
- Can overlook resilience, strength and persistence of culture in Individuals and communities
- The idea of intergenerational trauma can pathologize certain parenting practices, particularly around corporal punishment



11

Here we make a connection between history and present- day symptoms/behavior.

Sometimes violence was used as a protective factor

- Harsh punishment of kids because they would be lynched if they acted up
- Parents rather be the ones to issue corporal punishment – sign of “love”
- Aligning behaviors and actions with those with the power was for survival

Parents issue corporal punishment to their kids directly, in order to discipline, so they are not punished outside of the household where more is at stake. This is a “sign of love” because the parent is doing it for the child’s own good. This is linked back to historical trauma, corporeal punishment was done for survival.

Individual and social pathology

- Individual pathology is a term used to refer to biological or psychological explanations of criminal or deviant behavior by individuals.
- Social pathology is a term used to describe social factors, such as poverty, old age or crime that bolster social disorganization. At the same time, the term refers to the study of these factors and the social problems they may lead to.

History over pathology

“Behavior was adapted to what was happening at the time, now it’s become maladaptive. Beatings were supposed to save lives. I can’t tell you why you can’t go outside at night, because people wanted to hang you.”

Sam Simmons



14

There is no need to carry out certain actions anymore, ones we consider maladaptive, because they are no longer necessary for survival, we are beyond that point. However, the behavior still exists and it’s done because now it’s traditional.

What's the Impact on Us Today?

Individual	Family	Community	Society
(how it affects you personally)	(what my relatives do)	(where we live and what is happening)	(us as a people)

15

This activity can be done with the entire round table or in small groups of 4-6. Go through each column and have a conversation about how historical trauma impacts them today.

We want to start to link how historical trauma has shaped the way you do things. An example: "Because of colonization, I don't feel like I got a fair education because the history of my people isn't represented in the text books."

History is Not in the Past

- “Stop blaming me for what happened in the past”
- “You need to get over it/move on”
- “Well, that’s my opinion so let’s agree to disagree”
- “But America is one big melting pot”
- “But what about black-on-black crime?”
- “Why must you always be the victim?”



16

Here is a list of quotes that are often heard.

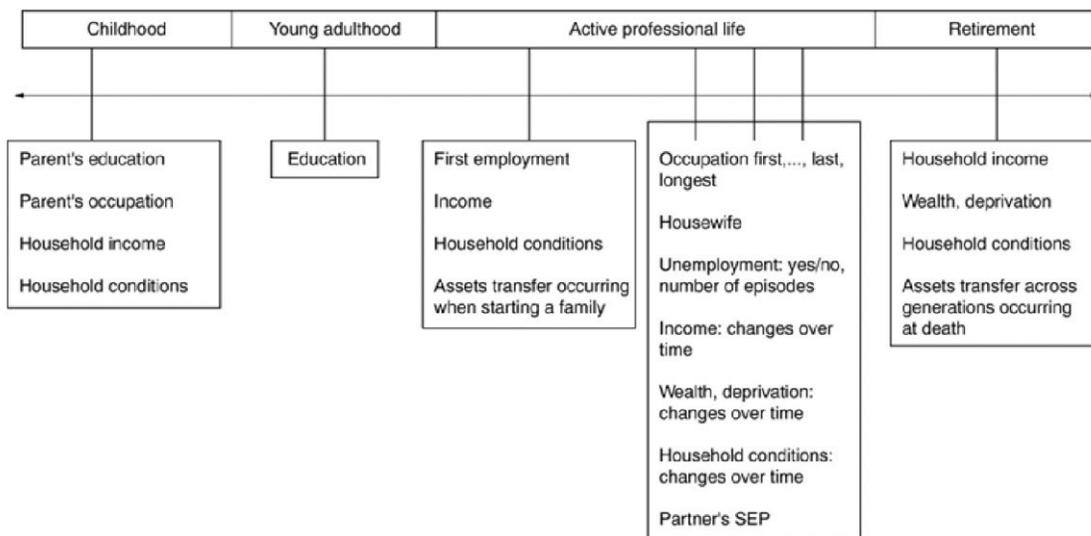
Discussion Questions:

- Why is it this way?
- Why do people say these things?
- What is your reaction when you hear these things as a person of color?

The disenfranchisement of communities of color due to racism is now built into the fabric of institutions: education, medical, political, and judicial. If you have a good stable upbringing you

have less anxiety and stress, when you don't know what you're going to eat daily or are in a precarious housing situation, etc, your life focus differs dramatically from those who do have stable housing, income to pay for college, and reliable transportation.

Trauma Affects where we start



Examples of indicators measuring life course socioeconomic position ([Galobardes et al, 2006](#))



17

Discussion question:

How does this affect those who can assimilate in the mainstream and those who cannot?

ACEs: The 10 Areas of Trauma

1. Psychological Abuse
2. Physical Abuse
3. Sexual Abuse
4. Emotional Neglect
5. Physical Neglect
6. Loss of a Parent (for any reason)
7. Mother Treated Violently
8. Substance Abuse
9. Mental Illness
10. Criminal Behavior in the Household

The questions are described on the ACE website

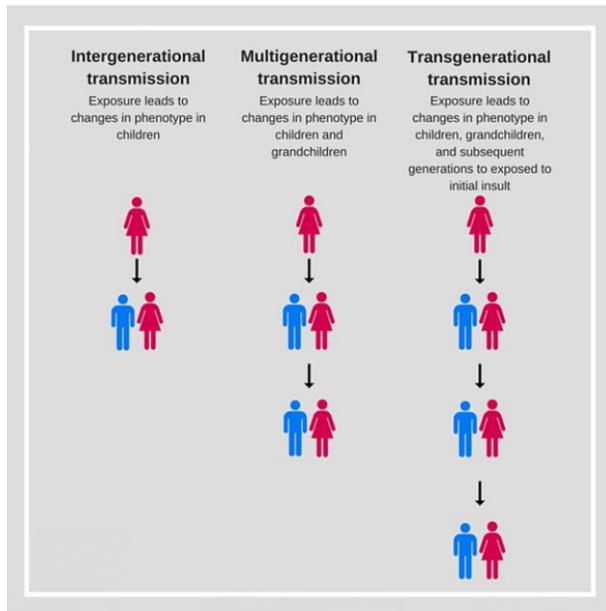
www.cestudy.com



18

Adverse Childhood Experiences (article in bibliography) It shows how the more of these experiences a child has, the higher levels of trauma and more challenges they'll have throughout their lifetime. This can be presented as a discussion or activity. Everyone can count how many they experienced in childhood.

Trickle Down Affect



The "genotype" is the genetic makeup of an organism, the phenotype is how genetic and environmental influences come together to create an organism's physical appearance and behavior.

Here we see the Trickle Down Affect which explains how trauma starts to become historical and intergenerational. Environmental influences / external stressors begin to shape a person's physical appearance and behavior. State violence, the war on drugs, and hyper-policing have shaped the way boys and men of color interact within society, and has exacerbated interpersonal violence.

Knowing this information can explain certain behavior. It can explain why a young black man whose just been shot comes into the emergency room chooses not to talk to hospital staff or the

cops about the event. It is his recent history of being targeted and abused by police that has influenced the way he responds in this setting, but also because of how such institutions have historically treated his community. In this instance, his personal justice and safety is set aside to protect himself and his community from the institution.

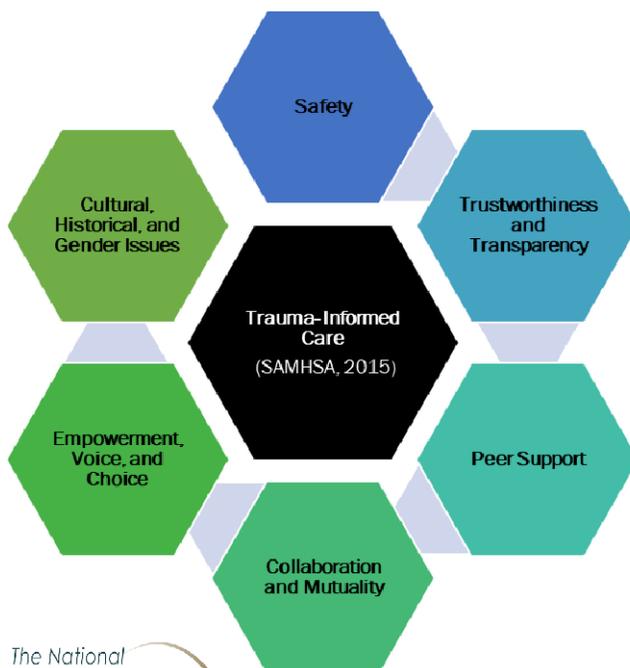
Institutional Responses



Institutions are set up to manage large volumes of people. Their efficiency is based largely on specialization (DMV, criminal court, civil court, family court, all the separate departments of social services, and community based human services like

domestic violence shelters, fatherhood programs, etc.) and their effectiveness is largely based on producing the same outcome no matter who comes into the program. The challenges with “evidence-based practices” is that institutional practice becomes static, and must remain static in order to maintain model fidelity to prove the practice is successful. The cost of this is depriving the individual the opportunity to gain help with acquiring needs unaddressed in that model.

Principles of Trauma-Informed Care



The National
RESOURCE CENTER
for **REACHING VICTIMS**
Helping those who help others

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and Transparency
3. Peer Support
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice
6. Cultural, Historical, and gender issues

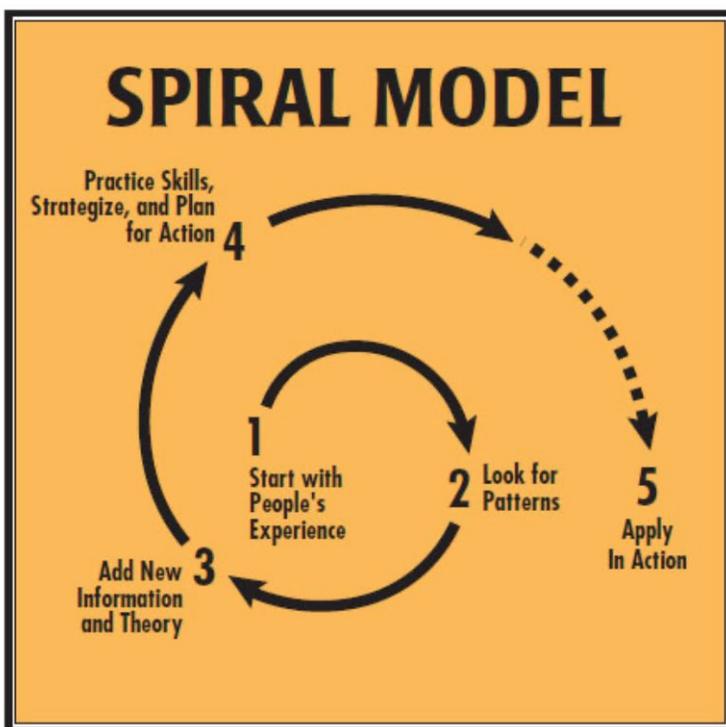
21

Trauma Informed Care: how institutions account for trauma of

victims and works to undo systematic barriers that further disenfranchises them.

This chart names the ways institutions are building policy and responsiveness: safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, cultural historical and gender issues, empowerment, voice, and choice, and collaborations and mutuality.

Addressing Historical Trauma



Spiral Model: 1. Start with people's experience; 2. Look for patterns; 3. Add new information and theory; 4. Practice skills, strategize, and plan for action; 5. Apply in action

22

Process for addressing Historical Trauma:

1: Start with People's Experience

What are the experiences or realities of boys and men of color?

2: Look for Patterns

What are patterns in responses to them and their responses to you? When you hear a statement like “they always” coming from a co-worker or white person, or “you always” coming from boys/men of color those are indicators of a common enough occurrence to be a pattern.

3: Add New Information and Theory

Take and apply what you have heard today into your strategy.

4: Practice Skills, Strategize, and Plan for Action.

Where are the specific places where you enhance skills, policies, or work effort?

5: Apply in Action

Deepen your understanding of historical trauma as you apply action. Change may not always be easy or successful.

Conclusion

- What was frustrating?
- What was validating?
- How will this change how you work with boys and men of color?

- Additional comments or questions



23

Closing

Thank participants for attending and sharing their thoughts and ideas. Ask people if they have anything they would like to say or comments about the training overall. We recommend having some type of closing activity like a circle, song, or prayer to end on a positive note and send people off in a good way.