


**Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Key Implications for School Administrators**  
Developed for the Virginia Department of Education

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Agenda

**What is Trauma?**

- o Define Trauma
  - o **Activity:** Children who experience Trauma, National Child Traumatic Stress Network
- o Adverse Childhood Experiences
  - o **Video:** Children, Violence, and Trauma: Interventions in Schools, *Office of Victims of Crime*

**Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships**

- o Toxic Stress
  - o **Video:** Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development, *Harvard University*
  - o **Insight:** Trigger Responses & the Brain
- o Brain Development
  - o **Insight:** Arousal Relaxation Theory
  - o **Insight:** The Competent Giant
- o Observations in Preschool, Elementary, Middle, and High School Students

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**Resiliency & Role of Schools in Responding to Trauma**

- o The 4's: Key Assumptions in a Trauma-Informed Response
- o Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools

LUNCH

**Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools**

- o Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools
  - o **Activity:** Examining Student Profiles & School-based Responses
- o Trauma-Sensitive Schools in the US
  - o **Video:** *Paper Tigers*
- o Establishing a Steering Committee
- o Developing an Action Plan
  - o *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* Flexible Framework
  - o Integrative Practices & Strategies

**Self-Care**  
**Wrap-up & Questions**

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- “Fit” the school’s culture and support its capacity to tailor solutions to priorities identified by its educators.
- Foster the growth of a trauma-sensitive learning community.
- Please note: These are **tools**—not instructions—to equip schools with the ability to select their own trauma-sensitive approaches to meet the particular needs of their students and families.

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Students who have had highly stressful experiences in their lives can experience difficulties in the school setting.
- Childhood trauma can have a direct, immediate, and potentially overwhelming impact on the ability of a child to learn.
- Learning, remembering, trusting, or managing feelings and actions can be a painful challenge for a child who has experienced violence or other adversity
- Being unaware of trauma’s impacts can result in children being harshly punished as behavior is misread as lazy, apathetic, or intentional misconduct.

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

#### Discussion

- Do you have students in your school who exhibit any similar behaviors?
- How might these behaviors affect the school and learning environment?
- What, if any, are some commonalities among the students?

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### What is Trauma?

- An experience that threatens life or physical integrity and that overwhelms a person's ability to cope or the capacity to regulate emotions.
- Evoke feelings of extreme fear and hopelessness
- Reactions to traumatic events are determined by the subjective experience of the individual, which could be impacted by developmental and cultural factors.
- Children who have experienced traumatic events may have behavioral problems, or their suffering may not be apparent at all.

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### What is Trauma?

- Some traumatic experiences once in a lifetime, others are ongoing.
- Many children have experienced multiple trauma, and for too many children, trauma is a chronic part of their lives.




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### Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.
- These experiences range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian. Homelessness, poverty, loss or death of loved ones or friends, and exposure to violence.
- Research has found that the highest levels of risk for negative outcomes are associated with having experienced multiple ACEs.

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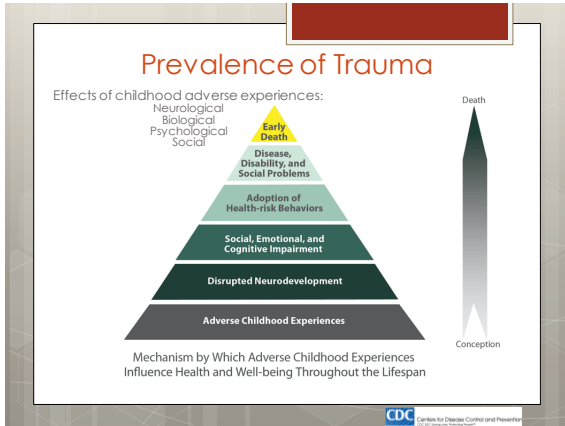
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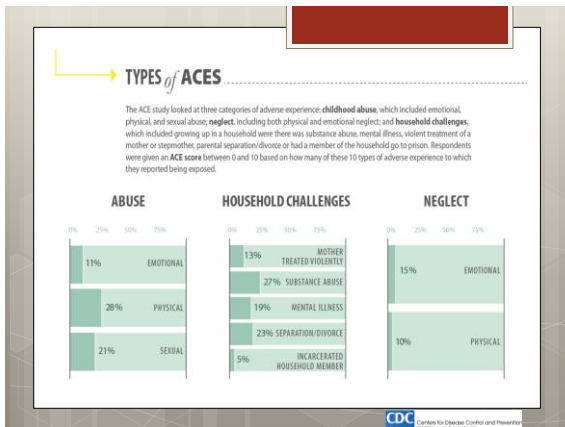
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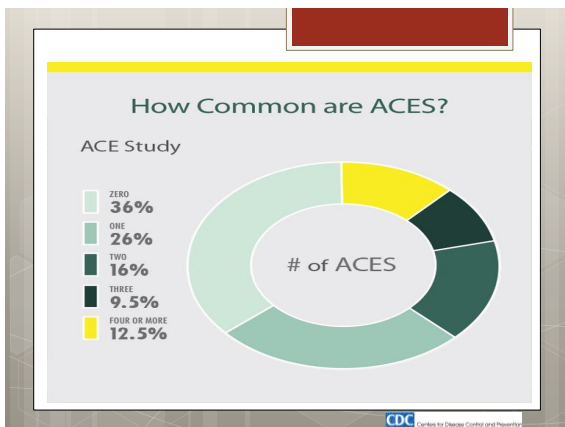
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### Traumatic Experiences in Childhood

- Further studies have expanded our understanding of the prevalence of traumatic experiences in childhood.
- Just under half (46%) of children in the U.S. have experienced at least one ACE.
- Nationally, a slight majority of children have not experienced any ACEs, but in 16 states more than half of children have experienced at least one ACE.
- In Virginia, the number of ACEs reported among children aged birth to 17, with Zero (58%), One or Two (34%), or Three or More (8%)

National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), 2011-2012; ACEs Brief (2014)

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### Potentially Traumatic Events

- Physical or sexual abuse
- Abandonment
- Neglect
- Death or loss of a loved one
- Life-threatening illness in a caregiver
- Witnessing domestic violence
- Automobile accidents or other serious accidents




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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Schools have an important role to play in providing stability and a safe space for children and connecting them to caring adults.
- Creating a Trauma-Sensitive School is about understanding who experiences trauma and how it impacts learning, and developing responses to minimize its impact.

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Exposure to violence can impede a child's ability to learn and thrive in school. Teachers, coaches, and other school staff and volunteers can play a critical role in recognizing and reporting signs of violence and trauma in a child's life. This video identifies some types of violence that children may experience at school or on their way to or from school, and highlights preventative measures that some schools are taking to protect their students.



[Children, Violence, & Trauma: Interventions in Schools](#)  
(Office of Victims of Crime)

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## Potentially Traumatic Events



- Bullying
- Life-threatening health situations and/or painful medical procedures
- Witnessing or experiencing community violence (e.g., shootings, stabbings, robbery, or fighting at the home, in the neighborhood, or at school)
- Witnessing police activity or having a close relative incarcerated

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## Potentially Traumatic Events

- Life-threatening natural disasters
- Acts or threats of terrorism (viewed in person or on television)
- Living in chronically chaotic environments in which housing and financial resources are not consistently available



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### Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

- Traumatic events have the potential to alter a child's worldview and the architecture of the developing brain.
- Trauma experiences profoundly affect memory, language development, and writing
- Children may respond fearfully to people or situations at school
- Trauma response undermines an ability to self-regulate emotions, behavior, and attention – which results in withdrawal, aggression, and inattentiveness.

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### Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships

- **Positive stress response** is a normal and essential part of healthy development, characterized by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels.
- **Tolerable stress response** activates the body's alert systems to a greater degree as a result of more severe longer-lasting difficulties, such as the loss of a loved one, a natural disaster, or a frightening injury.
- **Toxic stress response** can occur when a child experiences strong, frequent, and/or prolonged adversity which can disrupt the development of brain, and increase the risk for stress-related disease and cognitive impairment, well into the adult years.



NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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### Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships

**Fight, Flee, or Freeze (to protect)**

Hypothalamus  
Hippocampus  
Breathing rate increases  
Heart rate and blood pressure increase  
Release of adrenaline and cortisol

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development – Center on Developing Child at Harvard University

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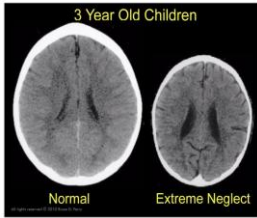
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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

Impact on Brain Development



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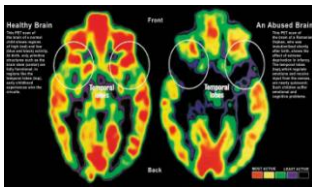
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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

Impact on Brain Development



CDC Center for Disease Control and Prevention

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### BREAK

Let's take a 10 minute break. During this time, tend to your self-care needs. ☺

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

- Children may be impacted by a traumatic event; however, not all children have the same response.
- A child's response to these potentially traumatizing events will vary depending on:
  - Characteristics of the child (e.g., age, stage of development, personality, intelligence and prior history of trauma)
  - Environment (e.g., school and family supports),
  - Experience (e.g., relationship to perpetrator)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Preschool children:

- Separation anxiety or clinginess towards teachers or primary caregivers
- Regression in previously mastered stages of development (e.g., baby talk or bedwetting/toileting accidents)
- Lack of developmental progress (e.g., not progressing at same level as peers)
- Re-creating the traumatic event (e.g., repeatedly talking about, "playing" out, or drawing the event)
- Difficulty at naptime or bedtime (e.g., avoiding sleep, waking up, or nightmares)
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, overreacting to minor bumps and bruises)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Preschool children:

- Changes in behavior (e.g., appetite, unexplained absences, angry outbursts, decreased attention, withdrawal)
- Over- or under-reacting to physical contact, bright lighting, sudden movements, or loud sounds (e.g., bells, slamming doors, or sirens)
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence of the traumatic event
- New fears (e.g., fear of the dark, animals, or monsters)
- Statements and questions about death and dying

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Elementary School students:

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others (more clingy with teacher or parent)
- Worry about recurrence of violence
- Increased distress (unusually whiny, irritable, moody)
- Changes in behavior:
  - Increase in activity level
  - Decreased attention and/or concentration
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
  - Absenteeism

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Elementary School students:

- Distrust of others, affecting how children interact with both adults and peers
- A change in ability to interpret and respond appropriately to social cues
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, overreaction to minor bumps and bruises)
- Changes in school performance
- Recreating the event (e.g., repeatedly talking about, "playing" out, or drawing the event)
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Elementary School students:

- Statements and questions about death and dying
- Difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Middle School students:

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:
  - Decreased attention and/or concentration
  - Increase in activity level
  - Change in academic performance
  - Irritability with friends, teachers, events
  - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Absenteeism
- Increased somatic complaints (e.g., headaches, stomachaches, chest pains)
- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in Middle School students:

- Repeated discussion of event and focus on specific details of what happened
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in High School students:

- Anxiety, fear, and worry about safety of self and others
- Worry about recurrence or consequences of violence
- Changes in behavior:
  - Withdrawal from others or activities
  - Irritability with friends, teachers, events
  - Angry outbursts and/or aggression
  - Change in academic performance
  - Decreased attention and/or concentration
  - Increase in activity level
  - Absenteeism
  - Increase in impulsivity, risk-taking behavior

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in High School students:

- Discomfort with feelings (such as troubling thoughts of revenge)
- Increased risk for substance abuse
- Discussion of events and reviewing of details
- Negative impact on issues of trust and perceptions of others
- Over- or under-reacting to bells, physical contact, doors slamming, sirens, lighting, sudden movements
- Repetitive thoughts and comments about death or dying (including suicidal thoughts, writing, art, or notebook covers about violent or morbid topics, internet searches)
- Heightened difficulty with authority, redirection, or criticism

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

### What you might observe in High School students:

- Re-experiencing the trauma (e.g., nightmares or disturbing memories during the day)
- Hyperarousal (e.g., sleep disturbance, tendency to be easily startled)
- Avoidance behaviors (e.g., resisting going to places that remind them of the event)
- Emotional numbing (e.g., seeming to have no feeling about the event)

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## Impact on Learning, Behavior, & Relationships at School

- Be alert to the behavior of the students who have experienced or more adverse events.
- Be aware of both the children who act out AND the quiet children.
  - Avoidance and depression

Even a child who does not exhibit serious symptoms may experience some degree of emotional distress, which may continue or deepen over an extended period of time.

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## Resiliency & Recovery



- When given support, children and adolescents will recover from the fear and anxiety caused by a traumatic experience.
- Some children and adolescents need more help over a longer period of time in order to heal and may need continuing support from family, teachers, or mental health professionals.
- Anniversaries of the event or media reports may act as reminders to the adolescent, causing a recurrence of symptoms, feelings, and behaviors.

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## Resiliency & Recovery

Treatment that has been demonstrated to be effective in helping children and adolescents deal with traumatic stress reactions:

- Education about the impact of trauma
- Helping adolescents and caregivers re-establish a sense of safety
- Techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions
- An opportunity to talk about and make sense of the traumatic experience in a safe, accepting environment
- Involvement, when possible, of primary caregivers in the healing process

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## Resiliency & Recovery

How School Personnel Can Help a Student with Traumatic Experiences

- **Inform others and coordinate services.** Inform school administration and school counselors/psychologists about your concerns regarding the student.
- **Answer a child's questions.** Let the child know that you are available to talk if he or she wants to.
- **Create a supportive school environment.** Maintain normal and predictable school routines and provide extra reassurance and explanation if there is a change.
- **Raise the awareness of school staff and personnel.** Protect and respect a child's privacy, but advise appropriate staff that a child may be experiencing challenging times.

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## Resiliency & Recovery

### How School Personnel Can Help a Student with Traumatic Experiences

- **Modify teaching strategies.** Balance normal school expectations with flexibility. Use teaching strategies that promote concentration, retention, and recall and that increase a sense of predictability, control, and performance.
- **Support families.** Build a relationship of trust with the student's family that conveys reliability, friendliness, consistency, compassion, and predictability in your actions.
- **Make referrals.** Consider a referral to a mental health professional. Work within your school's guidelines and with your administration to suggest a referral.

NCTSN Center for the Study of Trauma and Stress

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## Resiliency & Recovery

- **Empower students by offering choices and praising positive choices.** Avoid power struggles with students by offering choices for participation and encouraging their sense of agency and control over their lives.
- **Be sensitive to the fact that students' parents/caregivers may also be trauma survivors.** When working with parents and caregivers, recognize that their past experiences may influence how they interact with you and the school.
- **Check in with students.** Let the student know that you care and the school cares.
- **Remember anniversaries.** Students may reveal that a particular date or time of the year reminds them of a traumatic experience (e.g., the date a student was placed into foster care or the anniversary of a loved one's death).

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## Role of Schools in Responding to Trauma

- Adopt a trauma lens through which students and their learning, behavior, and relationships can be understood.
  - Systemic Barriers
  - Supports a shift in culture that sustains trauma sensitive thinking and acting
  - Clarifies the need for a school-wide approach
  - Identifies integrated and coordinated approach to service delivery

**TRAUMA**




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### Role of Schools in Responding to Trauma



- The best approach is to make sure to provide trauma-sensitive learning environments for **all** children.
- Holistic approach to shaping organizational culture, practices, and policies to be sensitive to the experiences and needs of traumatized individuals.

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### Role of Schools in Responding to Trauma

- **Realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery
  - Acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic occurrence in students' lives
- **Recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system
  - Acknowledging trauma and its triggers, and be sensitive to unique needs of students
- **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices
  - Providing a safe, stable, and understanding environment for students and staff & Create a flexible framework that provides universal supports
- Seeks to **Resist** re-traumatization.
  - Prevent re-injury or re-traumatization by avoiding stigmatizing and punishing students.




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### Creating Trauma Sensitive Schools

- Gradually strengthen awareness that traumatic experiences may be at the heart of a student's learning, behavior, or relationship challenges.
- Develop deeper understanding of how trauma-sensitive environments help children (and families) to feel safe, supported, and engaged in learning.
- Gain clarity on school-wide approach that values teamwork, coordination, and collaboration

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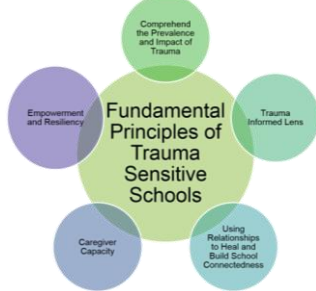
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Trauma sensitivity requires more than just awareness on the impact of learning.



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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### Trauma Informed Lens

- Sustaining trauma-sensitive ways of thinking and acting will require a shift in the culture of a school.
- A shift from "What's Wrong with You" to "What's Happened to You"
- Shared responsibility to support rather than fix
- Top-down, Bottom-Up Involvement from EVERYONE! Administrators, educators, paraprofessionals, parents, custodians, bus drivers, food services.
- Policies, practices, procedures must reflect change to support a safe environment

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### Using relationships to Heal & Build School Connections

- Address needs in holistic ways
- Take into accounts that children's reactions to trauma may mask, rather than reveal, challenges.
- Get to underlying behaviors to provide supports and build skills that respond to those needs

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## Caregiver Capacity

- A trauma-sensitive school makes deliberate efforts to engage parents and caregivers
- Help to make meaningful connections with parents and caregivers and the school community
- The more involved parents become, the more students begin to feel connected.

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## Empowerment & Resiliency

- Maximize opportunities for children to be successful
- Bolster strong relationships with adults and peers
- Teach and provide opportunities to self-regulate behaviors, emotions, and attention
- Promote academic and non-academic success, physical and emotional health and well-being.

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## Comprehend the Prevalence & Impact of Trauma

- Addressing the impacts of trauma takes the solidarity of a whole community
- Recognition that the children's experience may create unsettling or uncomfortable memories for helping adults.
- Need for supportive environments for staff that promote healing and self-care

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**LUNCH BREAK**

When we return, we will discuss implications for practice to establish trauma-sensitive schools

Work towards preparing an action plan for your school

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**Let's Recap....**

- What is Trauma?
- How does trauma impact children and youth?
- What can schools do to intervene and support children and youth with traumatic experiences?




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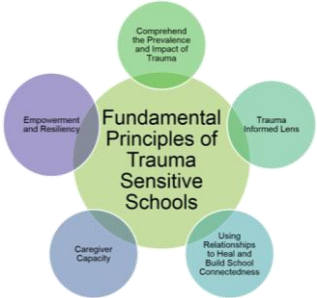
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Trauma sensitivity requires more than just awareness on the impact of learning.



**Fundamental Principles of Trauma Sensitive Schools**

- Comprehend the Prevalence and Impact of Trauma
- Trauma Informed Lens
- Using Relationships to Heal and Build School Connectedness
- Caregiver Capacity
- Empowerment and Resiliency

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Specific strategies can be used to support the learning needs of students who have experienced trauma
  - Discovering and building on the student's individual interests and competencies; maintaining predictable routines and expectations; maintaining expectations for the student that are consistent with those of his/her peers; and providing positive behavioral supports.

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- Language-based teaching approaches can help students process information and alleviate their fears.
- Students who have experienced trauma often pay more attention to nonverbal cues than verbal communication, so using multiple forms of communicating information and helping students identify and verbally express their feelings are important strategies to support learning.

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- School evaluations, including psychological, speech and language, functional behavioral, and occupational therapy evaluations, should assess the role of trauma and identify needed supports.

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## Trauma-Sensitive Schools Across the US

### Trauma-Informed Student Engagement: Ford Elementary School, Lynn, MA

- After receiving a state grant to focus on youth traumatized by violence, Ford Elementary School trained staff and established a "trauma committee" that works to identify children whose behaviors may be impacted by trauma at home.
- These staff members then identify the **strengths, interests, and talents** of those students experiencing trauma, and use this information to **help engage students** in school.
- For example, in one case, a teacher recognized a student's passion for baseball and facilitated an arrangement where this student, who was struggling academically and experiencing domestic violence at home, was able to join the team provided he improved his grades.
- Recognizing and building on the student's strengths led to improved behavior, grades, and self-esteem.

Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

### Group Discussion

- What are your reactions to the information you have received?
  - What concerns do you have as an administrator about the student's behavior?
  - What are the potentially traumatic events?
- Do you currently have supports in place to address these challenges?
  - Are they policy, practices, or procedures?
  - Internal or external resources?
- What, if anything, would you do differently?

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## Trauma-Sensitive Schools Across the US

### Lincoln High School, Walla Walla, WA



"Paper Tigers" chronicles a year in the life of Lincoln High School in the community of Walla Walla, Washington. The kids who come to Lincoln have a history of truancy, behavioral problems and substance abuse. After Lincoln's principal is exposed to research about the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), he decides to radically change the school's approach to discipline. With the aid of diary camera footage, the film follows six students, from getting into fights, grappling with traumatic events in their lives, and on the cusp of dropping out, they find healing, support and academic promise at Lincoln High.

*Paper Tigers*

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### Trauma-Sensitive Schools Across the US

#### Trauma-Informed Discipline Policies: Lincoln High School, Walla Walla, WA

- o Jim Sporleder, principal of Lincoln High School, implemented an approach to school discipline that looks to the underlying factors prompting student behaviors.
- o **Rather than automatically suspending** students for behavioral problems, **school leaders sit down with students to check in** and ask "what's going on?"
- o Students **still receive consequences** for their actions, including in school suspensions where they have access to a teacher and a comforting environment.
- o Suspensions and expulsions have also dropped dramatically, from 798 suspensions and 50 expulsions in the 2009-2010 school year (prior to implementing this trauma-informed approach), to 135 suspensions and 30 expulsions in 2010-2011.

Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

- o Establish a Steering Committee or Leadership Group led by the principal
  - o All actions related to trauma-sensitivity are aligned with other initiatives (bullying prevention, PBIS, social-emotional learning, etc.)
- o Closely collaborate with and on behalf of the entire school staff to strategize
- o Continually report back
- o Solicit input
- o Obtain approval on the planning the group has undertaken

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

In order to support the culture change required to make progress toward a trauma sensitive vision, "trauma-sensitivity" must be infused into each aspect of the school.

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Action Plan: Flexible Framework

1. **Leadership by school and district administrators to create** the infrastructure and culture to promote trauma-sensitive school environments
2. **Professional development and skill building for all school staff**, including leaders, in areas that enhance the school's capacity to create supportive school environments
3. **Access to resources and services, such as mental health** and other resources, that help students participate fully in the school community and help adults create a whole-school environment that engages all students
4. **Academic and nonacademic strategies that enable all children to learn**
5. **Policies, procedures, and protocols that sustain the** critical elements of a trauma-sensitive school
6. **Collaboration with families that actively engages them** in all aspects of their children's education, helps them feel welcome at school, and understands the important roles they play

Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Action Plan: Flexible Framework

1. **Leadership:** What role does school and/or district leadership play in implementation?
2. **Professional Development:** What professional development is necessary for implementation?
3. **Access to Resources & Services:** What resources, supports, or services need to be in place for students, families, and/or staff?
4. **Academic & Nonacademic Strategies:** What classroom strategies—both academic and nonacademic—support implementation?
5. **Policies & Procedures:** What policies, procedures, or protocols do we need to review, revise, and/or develop?
6. **Collaboration with Families:** What do we need to do to ensure that families are active partners in helping with implementation?

Helping Traumatized Children Learn, Massachusetts Advocates for Children 2005

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Action Plan: Flexible Framework

1. What ideas do you have about weaving trauma-sensitive approaches into the fabric of our school?
2. What challenges or barriers must we overcome in order to create a trauma-sensitive environment at our school?

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

### Self-Care

- *Compassion fatigue* or *secondary traumatic stress*—being physically, mentally, or emotionally worn out, or feeling overwhelmed by students' traumas.
- Trauma can take a toll on school professionals. Any educator who works directly with traumatized children and adolescents is vulnerable to the effects of trauma
- Compassion fatigue is not a sign of weakness or incompetence; rather, it is the cost of caring.

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

### Self-Care

1. Be aware of the signs. Educators with compassion fatigue may exhibit some of the following signs:
  - Increased irritability or impatience with students
  - Difficulty planning classroom activities and lessons
  - Decreased concentration
  - Denying that traumatic events impact students or feeling numb or detached
  - Intense feelings and intrusive thoughts, that don't lessen over time, about a student's trauma
  - Dreams about students' traumas

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools

### Self-Care

2. Don't go it alone. Anyone who knows about stories of trauma needs to guard against isolation.
  - While respecting the confidentiality of your students, get support by working in teams, talking to others in your school, and asking for support from administrators or colleagues.
3. Seek help with your own traumas. Any adult helping children with trauma, who also has his or her own unresolved traumatic experiences, is more at risk for compassion fatigue.

NCTSN The National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools Self-Care

- Attend to self care. Guard against your work becoming the only activity that defines who you are.
  - Exercise and eating healthy
  - Engage in a hobby or activity
  - Create a health consistent structure and pattern in your personal life.
  - Know your limits.
  - Improve your understanding of trauma and secondary trauma.
  - Take a time out.
  - Seek support from co-workers, family, friends
  - Take Vacations (mentally & physically)

NCTSN Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress

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## Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools Self-Care

- What strategies do you currently have in place to ensure self-care for you and your education staff and personnel?
- What are some ways for which you can address the importance of self-care daily?
- What strategies would you like to incorporate into your school to ensure self-care?
- What challenges do you foresee or do you have to overcome?

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## Suggested Reading

- Alexander, D. W. (1999). *Children changed by trauma: A healing guide*. Oakland, CA: New Harbinger Publications. Information on how to help children cope with intense emotions brought on by violence, disaster, divorce, or the death of a loved one.  
Includes ways to deal with physical symptoms and suggestions on how to respond to children's questions and concerns.
- Ameyo-Jackson, L. (2000). Post-traumatic stress disorder in children and adolescents. In Sadock, B. J., Sadock, V. A., Ruiz, P., & Kaplan, H. I. (Eds.). (2009). *Kaplan & Sadock's comprehensive textbook of psychiatry*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health/Lippincott Williams & Wilkins.  
A cornerstone in the fields of psychiatry and mental health, this textbook discusses neural science, genetics, neuropsychiatry, psychopharmacotherapy, and other key subjects. The book includes case histories, the most current DSM-IV-TR criteria and tables, and up-to-date comparative classification codes from ICD-10.
- Black, D., Emanuel, R., & Mendelsohn, A. (1997). *Children and adolescents*. In Black, D., Newman, M., Hantzi-Hendicks, J., & Mezey, G. (Eds.). *Psychological trauma: A developmental approach*. London: Gaskell.  
Discusses normal and abnormal responses to stress, disasters, war and civil conflict, and interpersonal violence. The authors also address diagnosis, interventions, treatments, and legal aspects.
- Cohen, J., Mannarino, A. P., & Deblinger, E. (2004). *Treating trauma and traumatic grief in children and adolescents*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- A systematic approach for using cognitive behavioral therapy to treat traumatized children and their families.
- Doka, K., & Tucci, A. S. (Eds.). (2008). *Living with grief: Children and adolescents*. Washington, DC: Hospice Foundation of America.  
Overview of child and adolescent grief in a variety of situations. Chapters discuss various interventions, such as play therapy and school protocols and recommendations for reading materials are included.

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## Resources

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (<http://www.ncitsn.org/>) provides resources for a variety of audiences, including school personnel.
- The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care (<http://www.samhsa.gov/ncctic/about.asp>) is operated by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The website provides information on trauma-informed care, links to models that could be adapted for implementation by schools, and information on training and technical assistance support.
- The Safe Start Initiative (<http://www.safestartcenter.org/>) is operated by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and works to prevent and reduce children's exposure to violence and expand understanding of evidence-based practices.

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### Creating Trauma-Sensitive Schools: Key Implications for School Administrators

Developed for the  
Virginia Department of  
Education

For additional guidance and coaching for implementation and practices:

Monique Williams, MA  
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