Best Practices for Implementing Trauma-Informed Care with Youth who are Homeless or At-Risk of Being Homeless

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Exposure to traumatic events during childhood can affect brain development, how someone reacts to stress, and what they may find threatening or unsafe. Trauma can be a precursor to the development of a range of psychopathologies including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety, substance abuse, personality distortions and psychosis (APA, 2000, Rose, Freeman & Proudflock, 2012). Left untreated trauma can also result in medical conditions later in life including heart disease, cancer, respiratory problems and social conditions such as homelessness, prostitution or delinquency (Steele & Malchiodi, 2012; WISQARS, 2010). Maschi and Schwalbe (2012) cite studies which estimate up to 93% of youth in the juvenile justice system have histories of trauma. There are five different forms of trauma that can affect individuals: acute trauma (a single traumatic event which is time limited), chronic trauma (identified as multiple exposures), complex trauma (multiple exposures and its long term impact), systemic induced trauma (experienced when removed from home or multiple placements) and vicarious trauma (secondary trauma experienced by staff or workers (FLDU, 2010).

The purpose of this project was to identify best practices in trauma-informed care and how to incorporate those practices into youth services at Lutheran Social Service of MN to reduce the possibility of retraumatization of the youth served.

**Methodology**

A systematic literature review was conducted using the following databases: Eric on EBSCO, Medline, Psyc Info, ProQuest Databases, Social Service Abstracts, Sociological Abstract, ASSISA Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts, Criminal Justice Periodicals and Google Scholar. Key terms searched included “trauma-informed care” and “youth”. Evidence-based practices through reputable websites such as SAMHSA, Florida Department of Juvenile Justice, and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network were also searched, along with books regarding trauma. The literature was reviewed for relevant information, themes were identified, and recommendations developed. Findings were presented to staff of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota, Mankato which includes The REACH.

**References**

References are available upon request from the author.