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# Developing Trauma-Informed Practice in a Community Mental Health Clinic: In the Child Welfare Context

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# MINNESOTA STATE UNIVERSITY MANKATO

## Developing Trauma-Informed Practice in a Community Mental Health Clinic: In the Child Welfare Context

Kelly Froehle

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### Purpose

- This project provides direction for working with clients who present at First Street Center for mental health services with a trauma history.
- As child welfare staff work to develop trauma-informed practice, having similar procedures and services at First Street Center may complement services families are receiving from the county as a whole.

### Trauma Treatment Definitions

#### **Trauma Specific Interventions**

- Specific practices developed to address trauma.

#### **Trauma Specific Services**

- Programs that address trauma with a continuum of interventions from screening to treatment to recovery supports.

#### **Trauma Informed Care**

- Reflects the adoption of underlying principles rather than a specific set of procedures. An environment that promotes safety and trust for recipients as well as staff members.

### Literature Review

- Trauma results from an event or series of events experienced as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening (SAMHSA, 2012).
- Trauma has lasting effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA, 2012).
- Many clients in the MH system have experienced multiple traumas (Jennings, 2004).
- Children in the CW system often have experienced numerous traumatic events and exhibit traumatic stress symptoms (Conradi, Wherry, & Kisiel, 2011).
- Children who experience chronic trauma are more likely to have symptoms such as problems sleeping, paying attention, concentrating (Smyth & Gerber, 2013).

### Trauma Screening Tools

#### **Child**

- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Young Children
- Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children
- Traumatic Events Screening Inventory-Parent Report

#### **Adult**

- Traumatic Symptom Checklist
- Trauma Symptom Inventory
- Distressing Events Questionnaire

### Trauma-Focused Screening Topics

#### **Child abuse**

- Neglect
- Physical Abuse
  - Hitting
  - Shaking
  - Biting
  - Burning
  - Choking
  - Stabbing
- Sexual Abuse
  - Touching
  - Penetration
  - Pornography exposure
- Emotional Abuse

#### **Extended separation from caregivers**

- Out of home placement
- Incarceration of parent
- Kidnapping victim

#### **Rape**

#### **Domestic violence**

- As a victim
- As a child witness

#### **Significant physical injuries**

#### **Invasive medical procedures**

#### **Exposure to accidents**

#### **Natural disasters**

#### **Human disaster/terrorism**

#### **Witness to a violent death**

#### **Military service history**

### Evidence-Based Therapeutic Approaches for Trauma

#### **Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)**

- Similar to Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) with a specific focus on the trauma experience. Provides children and parents with knowledge and skills to process trauma, manage distressing thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, and enhance safety, parenting skills, and communication.

#### **Exposure Therapy**

- Form of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) where client learns to redefine how they think about and respond to the traumatic events in their past. Clients are re-exposed to the experience and learn to reprocess and make sense of what happened and decrease negative reactions.

#### **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**

- Uses a unique standardized set of procedures and clinical protocols which incorporate dual focus of attention and alternating bilateral visual, auditory, and/or tactile stimulation.

### Recommendations for First Street Center

- All staff should attend training on providing services to clients who have experienced trauma.
- Continue to provide a variety of therapeutic approaches including trauma specific interventions.
- Integrate trauma specific screening questions into the diagnostic assessment tool used for all intakes.
- Create and maintain a list of local practitioners who provide intensive, trauma-specific services.

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- Robin R Wingo, MSW, LISW



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Full references available upon request