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

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Developing Trauma-Informed Practice in a Community Mental Health Clinic:
In the Child Welfare Context
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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, 2015).

**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**
- 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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Full references available upon request