

## Webinar 1: An Update on Trauma Informed Practice

February 21, 2017

Trauma informed practice (TIP) is a critically important approach to improving substance use service, programming, policy, and health promotion.

Trauma informed practice is currently being enacted in many settings, ranging from homeless shelters to pregnancy and parenting programs to child, youth, and family services to the mental health and addictions field. While it includes changes in how we work with clients, it also includes changes in our service cultures and in inter-agency and inter-sectoral collaboration as well as work to change the social conditions that give rise to the need for trauma informed practice. TIP is not a specific technique or treatment modality. And, importantly, it does not require service providers to ask clients about experiences of trauma and clients do not need to disclose trauma histories to participate in services.

**Trauma informed practice refers to integrating an understanding of people's past and current experiences of violence and trauma into service delivery. The goal of trauma informed practice is to avoid re-traumatizing individuals and support safety, choice, and control in order to promote health and healing.**

TIP is a paradigm that recognizes that a majority of clients accessing substance use services will have past or current experiences of trauma and violence. Substance use is often a way to cope with experiences of trauma. Also, trauma affects access and engagement with services. For example, individuals who have experienced trauma may have difficulties with trust and relationships, be reluctant to participate in programs or be quick to drop out, or feel ambivalent about changing their substance use or developing new coping skills.

In Canada and internationally, there are numerous ongoing activities related to TIP in the substance use field. A few examples of current areas of work and promising practices:

- **Research and evaluation of the *Seeking Safety* model** (developed by Lisa M. Najavits) in a range of populations and settings. The program recognizes that connection between address trauma and substance use and has been show to be effective in reducing trauma symptoms, improving safe coping skills, and building therapeutic alliance.
- **TIP guidelines in substance use settings in Canada.** Examples: *Trauma Matters: Guidelines for TIP in Women's Substance Use Services* (Jean Tweed Centre); *Trauma Informed Practice Guide* (BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services); *Trauma Informed Discussion Guides* (IWK Health Centre, Nova Scotia Health, Government of Nova Scotia)
- **TIP in Indigenous contexts.** Examples: *Decolonizing Trauma Work* (Renee Linklater); cultural interventions to address substance use (Colleen Dell); neurodecolonization and mindfulness (Michael Yellow Bird)
- **TIP with newcomers to Canada.** Research suggests that many refugees and immigrants to Canada have a preference for trauma informed approaches to support with settlement (e.g., housing, employment, finances) as opposed to counselling and treatment for trauma.
- **TIP in community settings.** Examples: Adaptation of the Seeking Safety program at the Victoria Sexual Assault Centre; The Mothering Project (Manito Ike Kagiikwe), a pregnancy outreach

program in Winnipeg, includes motivational interviewing, yoga and mindfulness, changes in program space to create safety, low threshold intake process, support with system navigation.

- **TIP and harm reduction.** Pregnant and postpartum women in Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside had a preference for TIP over trauma treatment – a more appropriate approach in a low threshold program (Torchalla, 2015).
- **TIP and substance use prevention.** School-based drug prevention programs that include self-regulation training (Pokhrel et al, 2013). Psychoeducational game app to support teen girls with high rates of adverse childhood experiences Sockolow et al (2017).
- **TIP and peer support.** Resources: *Engaging Women in Trauma Informed Peer Support: A Guidebook* (NCTIC); *Trauma Informed Community Building: A Model for Strengthening Community in Trauma Affected Neighborhoods* (Bridge Housing Corporation)
- **TIP and workforce support.** Resources: *When Compassion Hurts* (Best Start Resource Centre); *Staying Deadly: strategies for preventing stress and burnout among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander alcohol and drug workers* (NCETA); *Restoring Sanctuary* (Sandra Bloom). Signs of Safety movement in child welfare practice.

There are many initiatives and learning models to implement trauma-informed practice at an organizational/agency level. Strategies include in-person and online learning, peer reflection, supervision and coaching, collaboration and partnerships. For example;

### 1. IWK Health Centre (Nova Scotia)

TIP education and training. Level 1 for everyone within the agency. Level 2 for mental health and addictions staff, with a focus on attachment, regulation, and competency (ARC). Level 3 for specific staff, with a focus on treatment of trauma. <http://yourexperiencesmatter.com/>

### 2. The Jean Tweed Centre for Women and their Families (Toronto)

Learning and collaborating with partners. Collaboration between substance use field and child welfare services – workshops with child welfare staff and foster parents in Ontario. Also collaborating with child care centres and housing sector to support TIP. TIP training for program evaluators. <http://jeantweed.com/>

#### Presenters:

Lucy Hume and Julie Bloomenfeld, Jean Tweed Centre  
Denise Bradshaw, Heartwood Centre for Women  
Holly Murphy, IWK Health Centre

#### Facilitator:

Nancy Poole, Center of Excellence for Women’s Health

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