

8 Strategies for being trauma informed at the organizational level



1 Leading and communicating about being trauma informed

There are many ways of signalling that a service is trauma informed: in written materials for clients, families and service partners, in office signage, and through speeches by leadership. The language in policies, intake questions, forms, reports and other documentation can be supportive, recovery-oriented and strengths based through less emphasis on rules, consequences and strict expectations, and more emphasis on flexibility, hope and success towards growth and healing.

2 Engaging service users and supporting participation in service planning

Service users can provide advice on how/if their experience of the service feels health promoting and non-traumatizing, and how their experience could be improved. It can be helpful to offer training for service users on trauma informed practice and taking up leadership in program development and evaluation, reviewing policies, etc.

3 Training all staff members

Ongoing training about the effects of trauma and on trauma informed approaches can be made available to clinical and non-clinical staff via in person sessions, e-learning, ongoing coaching, and supervision (including coaching by credible peers).

4 Creating a physically, emotionally, and culturally safe environment

Many organizations have found that a more welcoming physical environment (e.g., comfortable, welcoming reception area) makes a key difference to being a trauma-informed service.

Emotional safety can be created in each interaction through emphasis on choice and collaboration, and in the creation of space for co-practice of self regulation skills.

Cultural safety is grounded in respectful engagement and results in a non-discriminatory environment where people feel safe and recognized for their interests in culturally relevant approaches when receiving support.

5 Preventing secondary traumatic stress in staff

The health and safety needs of all staff are a key component of trauma-informed organizations. Provision of support to manage work stress that may result in vicarious trauma, burnout, and compassion fatigue is important. Opportunities for collective debriefing, social learning, and health promoting practices such as yoga and mindfulness practice can be implemented.

6 Supporting a healthy workforce

There are many ways to support a healthy workforce: access to counselling, professional training, trauma informed supervision, involvement in decision making, wellness initiatives, opportunities for self-care, resilience training, paid leave.

7 Providing or linking to trauma specific treatments

Clients with trauma histories may not be ready for discussion of their history or for treatment of PTSD. It is important for trauma informed services to signal to clients that trauma counselling may be something they want to do later, and that trauma specific programming or services are available.

8 Engaging referral sources and partner organizations, and participating in cross sectoral initiatives

Many organizations and communities have formed networks to build awareness of trauma informed approaches and ensure that clients will receive trauma informed services when accessing help in any system of care including mental health, education, victim services, police, and child welfare. Collaborating with other organizations and sectors can create a foundation for systemic change.



This list is adapted from [Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation \(2016\)](#).

Adaptable checklists for organizations towards becoming trauma informed:

- [Centre for Sexuality and the Canadian Public Health Association](#) offer a detailed checklist on becoming trauma informed for organizations working with individuals with sexually transmitted and blood-borne infections.
- [Gender, Trauma & Violence Knowledge Incubator](#) offers a suite of trauma and violence informed training materials directed to violence against women services.
- Centre of Excellence for Women's Health offers checklists for substance use services in the [Trauma Informed Practice Guide](#) (Appendix 2) and for child and youth services in the [Healing Families, Helping Systems Guide](#) (pg. 32 -33)

Web-based Resources about trauma informed practice at the organizational level:

- [Trauma Informed Oregon](#)
- [Trauma Transformed](#)
- [The Sanctuary Model](#)
- [Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Centre](#)
- [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#)



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