Understanding Trauma: Its Impact on Child and Family Outcomes and a Trauma Informed Approach to Systems Transformation

Presented by:

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Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc.

Thrive: Maine’s Trauma Informed System of Care

- Began in 2005, covers 3 counties in central Maine
- Stakeholders include:
  - Child Welfare
  - Juvenile Justice
  - Education
  - Youth with Serious Emotional Disturbances and their Families
- Objective: build a system that understands the effects of trauma and avoids re-traumatizing those who seek services.

The Trauma-informed Approach

Instead of asking “what is wrong with you?” a trauma-informed approach asks “what has happened to you?”

Trauma Informed is Family Driven, Youth Guided and Culturally and Linguistically Competent

The Impact of Trauma on Children and Families: Prevalence of Trauma and Related Symptoms in Maine’s Trauma-Informed System of Care

Presentation Focus

- How much trauma have Thrive children, youth and their caregivers experienced?
- What effect does family’s history of trauma have on child and family outcomes?
- Have trauma symptoms reduced after 6 months?

Measuring Trauma: Evaluation Instruments

- Evaluation Committee conducted inventory of available trauma metrics
- Selected 3 trauma measurement tools for local evaluation to capture caregiver and youth trauma experiences
  - Traumatic Events Screening Instrument (TESI)
  - Lifetime Incidence of Traumatic Events (LITE)
  - Trauma Symptom Checklist (TSC)
Who Does Thrive Serve?

Who Have Caregivers Experienced?

What Are the Effects of Caregiver Trauma?

Effects of Trauma (cont’d)

What Have Children and Youth Experienced?

What Trauma-related Symptoms Do Children/Youth Have at Intake?
How Does Family Trauma History Affect Child/Youth Trauma Symptoms?

Conclusions and Implications

- Children and youth who experience trauma and trauma-related symptoms often do not have a PTSD diagnosis.
- Trauma experiences of parents and/or primary caregivers, particularly childhood events, appear to affect family functioning and youth symptoms.
- Trauma-informed approach to services appears to have positive effect on trauma symptoms.

What Does “Trauma-Informed” Look Like?

- Understand the role of violence and victimization play in the lives of children and families.
- Provide services and supports that are welcoming, respectful and appropriate to trauma survivors.
- Make every effort to avoid re-traumatizing individuals.

How Do Trauma Symptoms Change After 6 Months?

Development of the Trauma-Informed Agency Assessment Tool: Goals

- To improve the entire mental health system for Maine’s youth and families.
- To identify areas where agencies are doing well, and to guide next steps for making the system even more trauma-informed.
Development of the Trauma-Informed Agency Assessment Tool: Phases

- Create conceptual framework
- Test questions and methodology
- Revise questions, standards and methods
- Implement assessment statewide
- Provide results, CQI and technical assistance

Overview of the Tool

- Two-pronged approach gathers information from agency staff and consumers across six core trauma domains.
- Five-point rating scale used on all questions
- Administered online and via paper copies

Example of Family/Youth Questionnaire

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please rate the following statement based on your experiences with [Agency Name]</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I feel safe while in this agency.</td>
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<td>3. At this agency, I am confident that private communications cannot be overheard.</td>
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<td>4. It is easy for me to report complaints to someone at this agency.</td>
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Involvement of Youth and Family

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<td>Develop youth and family component of technical assistance plan</td>
<td>Staff assisted in all phases</td>
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The Domains

- Physical and Emotional Safety
- Children, Youth and Families
- Trauma Competence
- Cultural Competence
- Commitment to Trauma-Informed Philosophy

Example of Agency Staff Questionnaire

I. Physical and Emotional Safety

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How is it Scored?

- Standards for each core trauma element have been established.
  - Questions correspond to a core element.
  - Each question uses 5-point scale.
- Total potential score = number of questions that comprise the core element multiplied by 5
- Total actual score = summation of given responses

Final score = (total potential score/total actual score) * 100

Implementing the Assessment Statewide

- State contract required all agencies to complete assessment
- Agencies had one year to fulfill requirement
- Administration methods were streamlined
- Currently, reviewing results for final analysis, interpretation and feedback

Interpreting Results and Creating Technical Assistance and Training Plans

- The role of Technical Assistance
- Modeling strength based and trauma informed principles
- Working with youth and family to train and inform agencies
- Supporting Continuous Quality Improvement

What Do the Results Look Like?

The Contract Language

RIDER E

Program Requirements
Children’s Behavioral Health Services

System of Care Principles:

17. The goal of DHHS is that Providers of Children’s Behavioral Health Services are integrated in a Trauma Informed System of Care. Providers will promote the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) System of Care Principles of 1) Family Driven, 2) Youth Guided, and 3) Culturally and Linguistically Competent Care. These three System of Care Principles are described at http://www.systemsofcare.samhsa.gov/.

18. An additional principle for a Maine’s Children’s Behavioral Health System of Care is that it is Trauma Informed.


Statewide Continuous Quality Improvement Plan
The intake instrument package now contains a trauma-informed approach. Consider how your family organizations and youth organizations can support and lead this transformation! 

Conclusions and Implications

- Take into account parent and/or primary caregiver trauma history in all aspects of SOC
  - Select and implement trauma-specific practices that include both youth and family experiences
- Implement local/state policies that support trauma-informed approach, practice and evaluation
- Provide targeted education and training on trauma-informed approach

Evaluation of Trauma in Systems of Care

- The CMH national evaluation is becoming more aware of, and interested in, trauma
- The intake instrument package now contains a brief trauma screen
- A challenge: how do non-clinical interviewers collect detailed trauma histories?

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