Trauma-Informed Practices in the Afterschool Setting

Illinois Quality Afterschool Webinar
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Presenters

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Alternative Schools Network:
Building Trauma-Informed Programs

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Asn’s Youth Resilience Project

- Becoming a Trauma-Informed School
  - At least a 2-year process
  - Ongoing training/PD for all school staff
  - Assessment of school policies and procedures
  - Review of types of interventions/supports for students displaying trauma symptoms
  - Data monitoring/screening
  - Resource mapping of community partnerships
  - Resilience Team meetings each month
Learning Objectives

- Participants will understand:
  - Definitions of and different types of trauma
  - Prevalence of childhood trauma through the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study
  - Impact of trauma on brain development and common reactions to trauma
  - The Silver Lining: What we can do to create trauma-responsive afterschool programing
    - Assessing your program
    - Best practices
    - Caring adults
Positive Outcomes of Becoming Trauma Informed

- **Increased**
  - student resilience
  - ability to focus/pay attention
  - attendance
  - graduation rates
  - academic achievement
  - prosocial behavior and improved mental health outcomes

- **Improved**
  - coping skills
  - classroom behavior
  - emotional and physical safety for students

- **Decreased**
  - discipline referrals
  - physical aggression incidents
  - out-of-school suspensions
Guiding Principles of Trauma-Informed Practice

- Safety
- Trust
- Collaboration
- Empowerment/Choice/Voice
- Peer Support
- Culturally Responsive

Source: SAMHSA

Important to keep in mind

- Long-term process
- Reframing how we think of “bad” behavior
- You do not have to be a therapist to be therapeutic
- Invest your time on the front end – be proactive rather than reactive
- This is a relatively new field of study in education and research is ongoing
What is trauma?
Definition of Childhood Trauma – The 3 Es

- An emotionally painful or distressful EVENT
- The EXPERIENCE of the event induces an abnormally intense and prolonged stress response
- The event and experience of the event result in lasting physical and mental EFFECTS

Source: SAMHSA
http://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content/SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf
Complex trauma

Exposure to multiple chronic, stressful events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature, and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure.

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network (www.nctsn.org)
Adverse Childhood experiences study (ACES)

- 1998 – U.S. CDC’s landmark study
- 17,000 adults with private health insurance were surveyed
- Provided detailed information on their childhood experiences as they related to abuse, maltreatment, and family dysfunction

ACE Indicators Include
- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Substance-using household member
- Household member with mental health issues
- Witnessed domestic violence
- Divorced parents
- Incarcerated family member

Source: CDC
https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/
ACES Pyramid

Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
Trauma Exposure:
ASN Mentoring program

- Experienced Emotional Abuse 79.5%
- Experienced Physical Abuse 73.3%
- Experienced Violent Act(s) 68.9%
- Experienced Sexual Abuse 34.1%
- Witnessed Violent Act(s) 73.3%
- Witnessed Violent Death 64.9%

How often do you think about these things?
- All of the time 40.9%
- Most of the time 18.2%
Trauma impacts brain development and function in 3-year-old children.
Brain structure

Executive State
Prefrontal Lobes
What can I learn from this?

Emotional State
Limbic System
Am I loved?

Survival State
Brain Stem
Am I safe?
The stress response

- Fight
- Flight
- Freeze
Trauma & Brain Development

Adapted from Holt & Jordan, Ohio Dept. of Education
Reactions to traumatic exposure

- Behavioral/Socio-emotional
- Physical
- Cognitive
- Identity

Source: SAMHSA’s Project Thrive
What can we do about it?

TRAUMA EXPOSURE AND AFTERSCHOOL PROGRAMMING
Program self-Assessment

- What types of training/support do staff receive in regards to trauma and self care?
- Does your organization screen participants for trauma?
- What is the process for linking participants/parents to resources/coordinating care for trauma treatment?
- How is staff burnout assessed/addressed?
- What policies are in place for attendance, behavior, participation, and are they trauma informed?
- Are routines, activities structured with participants with a trauma history in mind?
Best practices

- Maintain structure and routines
- Provide safe spaces where youth can process situations
- Avoid power struggles
- Give students choice and sense of control when appropriate
- Be a source of unconditional positive regard
- Maintain high expectations
- Check your assumptions about youth
Best practices (cont’d)

- Integrate Restorative Justice practices and Social-Emotional Learning (life skills)
- Provide opportunities to belong and give back
- Practice mindfulness/meditation
- Move the body
- Teach techniques to help students self-soothe
- Keep a clean, organized physical environment
Your role

- **Be Aware**: Look for changes in behavior and be informed about signs and symptoms of trauma exposure
- **Be Available**: Listen to youth and help them to problem-solve
- **Be Resourceful**: Connect students to mental health professionals in your community
- Know yourself and your limits
- Avoid re-traumatization
- REGULATE, RELATE, then REASON
The silver lining

- The brain is malleable and develops into the mid-to-late 20s
- Human beings are resilient
- Emotional regulation is like a muscle
- Protective factors make a difference
- Your programs can be safe spaces where healing can happen
Resources/training providers

- UCAN’s Peace Hub https://peacehubchicago.org/
- Saint A’s 7 Essential Ingredients to Trauma-informed Care: http://www.sainta.org/trauma-informed-care/
- Cornell University’s Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Schools, Residential Child Care Project http://rccp.cornell.edu/tci/tci-T_system.html
- Mindful Schools, Online meditation/mindfulness courses for educators http://www.mindfulschools.org/
- 101 Trauma-Informed Interventions, by Linda A. Curran
- The Body Keeps the Score, by Bessel Van Der Kolk
- The Boy Who Was Raised as a Dog, by Bruce Perry
- www.acesconnection.com
- Illinois ACES Response Collaborative
- Environmental Scan Report, http://www.hmprg.org/Programs/EnviroScan
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QUESTIONS?
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http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/iqa/index.html
Resource Database

http://www.sedl.org/afterschool/iqa/iqa_database/resources