Trauma-Informed Hospital Workgroups: A Resource Guide for Launching and Sustaining a Workgroup

**The Illinois
ACEs Response
Collaborative**

Health & Medicine
POLICY RESEARCH GROUP

Introduction

Forming a Trauma-Informed Workgroup is a critical, early step to take in a hospital's journey to become trauma-informed (TI). TI transformation is a long process that requires strong champions at all levels of an organization. Forming a TI Workgroup mobilizes these champions and equips them with the knowledge and skills they need to lead change. These workgroups ensure participation from a broad range of departments, resulting in a TI transformation process that is responsive to the organization's priorities, its staff, and the population it serves.

This resource guide is designed to provide you with tools and strategies to establish and grow a workgroup at your organization. It also includes resources on adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), trauma, and trauma-informed care to share with each other and your organization as a whole. This guide will assist you in leading a workgroup that advocates for and implements trauma-informed practices that create safer, more supportive, and healing-centered environments.

Getting Started

Forming a Workgroup: Is Your Workgroup Representative of All Staff? How Can You Make Room at the Table?

Who Should Be Represented? Everyone. All hospital employees should be represented in your workgroup, not just those who provide mental healthcare or directly interact with patients. Trauma impacts the lives of everyone, across all departments. A diverse Workgroup membership ensures your workforce's priorities are heard. Try to include representatives from:

- Leadership
- Physicians
- Nurses and allied health
- Mental health and social supports
- Human resources and administration
- Ancillary staff such as security, environmental services, etc.

Background on ACEs, Trauma, and Resilience

The Workgroup can first serve as a forum/space for members to expand their understanding of ACEs, trauma, and trauma-informed care. The following resources can be reviewed/watched and then discussed as a group to ensure that all members have a thorough background on the role of ACEs and trauma on health.

- **Centers for Disease Control: ACE Study Infographic** - Visual, interactive representation of data from the 1995-1997 CDC-Kaiser Permanente study on ACEs prevalence and relationship to health outcomes.
- **KPJR Films: ACEs Primer (2018)** - Director James Redford and KPJR Films, the team behind the documentary *Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope*, define ACEs and their effects on health outcomes throughout the life course, and highlight the role of resilience in preventing and mitigating these effects.
- **TED Talk: The Science of Adversity and the Case for Systemic Empathy (2017)** - Double-board certified physician in pediatrics and internal medicine, Dr. Stan Sonu advocates changing our health care system to deliver the highest-quality care to underserved and disadvantaged communities.

Passionate about urban primary care, he strongly believes that in order to achieve system empathy, we need to recognize the health impact of adverse childhood stress and trauma.

- **KJPR Films: Resilience: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope (2018)** - Director James Redford highlights the long-term health and social effects of ACEs. The film also features stories about the work that is being done not only to address these outcomes, but also to implement resiliency in children and communities to prevent them from happening in the first place. Features interviews with authors of the original ACE Study, Rob Anda and Vincent Fellitti, as well as national experts such as Nadine Burke Harris, Laura Porter, and Jack Shonkoff. A facilitator's guide can be found **here** (60 minutes).
- **TED Talk: How Childhood Trauma Affects Health across a Lifetime (2015)** - Childhood trauma is not something you just get over as you grow up. Pediatrician Nadine Burke Harris explains that the repeated stress of abuse, neglect and parents struggling with mental health or substance abuse issues has real, tangible effects on the development of the brain. This unfolds across a lifetime, to the point where those who have experienced high levels of trauma are at triple the risk for heart disease and lung cancer. An impassioned plea for pediatric medicine to confront the prevention and treatment of trauma, head-on.
- **TED Talk: How Racism Makes Us Sick (2017)** - Trauma does not just happen on an individual level. Communities, whether they be neighborhoods or an entire race or ethnicity can also experience collective trauma, and it can have the same detrimental impact on health. Dr. David R. Williams developed a scale to measure the impact of discrimination on well-being, going beyond traditional measures like income and education to reveal how factors like implicit bias, residential segregation and negative stereotypes create and sustain inequality. In this eye-opening talk, Williams presents evidence for how racism is producing a rigged system -- and offers hopeful examples of programs across the US that are working to dismantle discrimination.
- **Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University** - Resource library from the Center on the Developing Child, a leader in research and development around childhood development. Can be arranged by media type and topic.

Once members have a deeper understanding of ACEs and trauma, then your Workgroup can begin to think about how your organization can address these issues. The following resources provide a background on trauma-informed care. Have members review these resources and discuss methods that stick out to you.

Trauma-Informed Care

What is Trauma-Informed Care?

The following resources provide a background on the principles of trauma-informed care and organizational transformation, and provide examples of successful implementation.

- **Health Management Associates: Trauma Informed Care: The Benefits of Clinical Integration and Organizational Buy-In (2016)** - In this webinar, the audience will learn the benefits of integrating trauma-informed care into clinical and organizational practices. Objectives include:
    - Understand the organizational imperative to explore trauma-informed approaches to care delivery.
    - Explore how trauma-informed care dovetails with broader culturally responsive care management efforts.
    - Appreciate the ROI for embracing trauma-informed approaches regarding patient attrition and staff productivity, absenteeism, and job satisfaction.
    - Learn how to provide training and support for trauma-informed care initiatives, helping health care teams to better identify trauma symptoms and open up a dialog with patients.
- **IL ACEs Response Collaborative: Trauma-Informed Systems Initiative with the San Francisco Dept. of Public Health (2018)** - In this webinar, Dr. Kenneth Epstein of the San Francisco Department of Public Health outlines the Trauma-Informed Systems Initiative (TISI), which is working to make SFDPH a more trauma-informed, safe, and supportive work environment and system of care. The TISI includes mandatory, foundational training for all 9,000 DPH employees

that is designed to create shared language and understanding about how trauma affects health, behavior, relationships, and systems, and provides practical tools for addressing trauma's effects within the workforce. Additionally, TISI is grounded in implementation science to ensure that knowledge transfer is associated with structures that support change and sustained implementation, and includes an embedded Champions Learning Community; a Train the Trainer component; alignment and collaboration across other public sector systems; leadership participation; and continuous evaluation.

- **Center for Health Care Strategies: Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation (2016)** - This brief draws on interviews with national experts on trauma-informed care to create a framework for organizational and clinical changes that can be practically implemented across the health care sector to address trauma. It also highlights payment, policy, and educational opportunities to acknowledge trauma's impact. Also available in **flyer format.**

- **Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center**- Developed by the Center for Health Care Strategies, this site offers a one-stop information hub for health care providers and other stakeholders interested in implementing trauma-informed care. It houses resources developed by experts including:

    o Foundational knowledge regarding the **impact of trauma on health** and **trauma-informed care**
    o **Testimonials from providers** who have adopted trauma-informed principles
    o **In-the-field examples** illustrating how to integrate trauma-informed care into health care settings
    o **Practical strategies and tools** for implementing trauma-informed approaches

Advocating for Trauma-Informed Transformation at Your Organization

What Are Your Organization's Priorities? How Does Trauma-Informed Care Fit in with These?

For trauma-informed transformation to be successful, it should be aligned with the organization's priorities. Once workgroup members feel as if they have a solid foundation of knowledge regarding trauma, ACEs, and trauma-informed care and organization building, you can begin strategizing how to integrate these concepts into your organization. This next step in trauma-informed transformation should focus on your organization's priorities and, and how your workgroup can advocate for the inclusion of trauma-informed practices. That includes:

Reviewing Your Organizational Strategic Plan.

To develop buy-in at the leadership level, it is important to understand how trauma-informed care can support your hospital in reaching its goals. One way to approach this is by reviewing your organization's strategic plan together. Discuss how trauma-informed practices can be integrated into these priorities. Draw up a list of trauma-informed practices to present to hospital leadership and discuss how they align with your organization's plan, and how trauma-informed care and practices can help your organization achieve its goals.

Integration and Partnership with Pre-existing Organization Initiatives.

Determine other major initiatives that are happening at your organization. Have members come together and list out all of the initiatives they are aware of and think about how you can integrate trauma-informed practices within them/how TI practices help you reach those goals. Reach out to the leaders of these initiatives and present the ways that trauma-informed practices will enhance their work. Remember that many wellness activities and programs encouraging employee health are also components of a TI approach. Utilizing these partnerships can help you realize what elements of TI practices are already present within your organization. Forming these partnerships is also a great method to promote buy-in from other areas of the organization and add members to your workgroup.

Action Planning

Trauma-informed change can have numerous steps and be a long process. As you begin to solidify priorities, take some time to draw up a plan of action for implementation. What is feasible for your

organization right now? What needs to be prioritized right now? What can be your goals for future dates - in 6 months, a year, 18 months, and beyond, for example. If they are not already members of the workgroup, consider inviting human resources leadership to join, or arrange a presentation for them to learn more about the benefits of trauma-informed practices. Having HR's input and support can help your workgroup determine what's achievable within the organization right now, and also advocate for your long-term goals within your organization.

Taking time to record your organization's goals and determining the steps needed to achieve these goals can not only help your workgroup flesh out ideas, but also discuss what is important and achievable and what support you need to reach these goals. TI transformation can be a years-long process, so determining both short and long-term goals can also help maintain momentum as you embark on this process. You can also use this time to delegate tasks and determine who amongst your workgroup will act as leaders and build connections with resources outside of the workgroup.

Fostering Buy-in and Maintaining Momentum

While your Workgroup may be the champions of TI care, it is important to include your organization's community at large in planning and implementation as well. Presenting these ideas not only helps to disseminate information, it also helps build commitment to change and invites new ideas into the process. Activities that include discussion or assessment also help your Workgroup and leadership gain more insight into individual employee concerns and expertise. Perhaps there are concerns that they have that leadership is unaware of or the strategic plan does not reflect. Remember that TI organization building involves input from all level and departments. Some steps your Workgroup can take to spread awareness about trauma, ACEs, and TI organization building include-

- Host a presentation on ACEs, trauma, and TI practices for hospital leadership, managerial staff, or other senior level employees. Discuss ways they can integrate this knowledge into their supervisory roles and pass on to their staffs.
- Host a presentation on ACEs, trauma, and TI practices for Grand Rounds or other staff-wide educational opportunities
- Host a screening and discussion of Resilience
- Host a screening and discussion of TED talks or webinars.
- Identify champions in each department- who is interested and invested, and who can enhance the group's work? Someone with a lot of knowledge or connections to various staff leaders can enhance your group.
- Host a "self-care" event for staff- yoga and meditation, fun walk, arts activity etc. Think about what your organization needs most. Make sure to get feedback on these events too, and work towards providing the types of care that your staff is most comfortable with and feels is effective.
- Host a training in Trauma 101 for staff members. Who should be a part of these trainings? Some people to try to include are leadership and managers, or specific departments that can offer unique support or knowledge. You may decide to train specific people first, and then move on to the staff as a whole. Discuss what is feasible and important at your organization.

About the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative

Established in 2011, the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative (the Collaborative) represents a broad range of organizations and agencies committed to expanding and deepening the understanding of the impact of childhood trauma and ACEs on the health and well-being of Illinois families and communities. The Collaborative works to catalyze a cross-sector movement to prevent trauma across the lifespan and to place the impact of childhood experience on wellbeing at the forefront of the equity agenda in Illinois. Our vision is a thriving and equitable Illinois in which individuals, families, communities, and all systems and sectors work together to prevent trauma, heal, and flourish.

About Health & Medicine Policy Research Group

Health & Medicine is a Chicago based non-profit working to improve the health of all people in Illinois by promoting health equity. Founded in 1981 by Dr. Quentin Young, it was formed as an action-oriented policy center—nimble, independent, and focused on regional health issues. Health & Medicine's mission is to promote social justice and challenge inequities in health and health care. It conducts research, educates and collaborates with other groups to advocate policies and impact health systems to improve the health status of all people. Health & Medicine has successfully developed health policy recommendations and implementation strategies for different public and private entities, earning the trust of the legislature, advocates, the media, researchers and policymakers at all levels of government in Illinois to become the region's "honest broker" on healthcare policy matters. Learn more at www.hmprg.org.