

Trauma-Informed Grantmaking

Untreated trauma stemming from adverse childhood experiences ([ACEs](#)) can lead to lasting negative developmental and health impacts. Fortunately, research shows that trauma-informed programs can increase the likelihood of resilience in children, adults, and whole communities. Funders can help organizations join the movement towards a more trauma-informed society. This shift begins with identifying and understanding each individual's experience and creating supportive environments.

This guide is meant to frame your thinking around systemic change. In what ways does your grantmaking, and the work of organizations you support, acknowledge and address the impacts of trauma in people's lives?

Guiding Concepts

Four main principles of trauma-informed care are:

- trauma awareness and education
- emphasis on safety
- opportunities for control and empowerment, and
- a strengths-based approach

Trauma-informed practices include:

- developing individualized interventions
- educating staff on an individual's trauma and triggers to develop a deeper understanding of their experience
- processing trauma to reduce symptoms
- practicing positive coping skills to regulate emotions
- establishing adaptive routines to reduce the impacts of a potentially chaotic environment

The single most common factor among children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult.

Organizations as a whole should be trauma-informed. Staff should be trained regularly on trauma sensitivity and supporting staff needs in order for them to, in turn, provide quality care.

Supporting shifts in organizational culture will create a system in which all people are supported.

National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

Here are just a handful of the research and tools compiled by NCTSN that can guide responses to trauma in every setting.

[What is a trauma-informed child and family service system?](#)

Start here!

[The 12 Core Concepts for Understanding Traumatic Stress Responses in Children and Families](#)

[Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom](#)

[Trauma-Informed Integrated Care for Children and Families in Healthcare Settings](#)

[Secondary Traumatic Stress Self-Rating Tool](#)

[Populations at Risk \(including homeless youth, LGBTQ youth, and youth connected to substance abuse\)](#)

[See the full library of resources...](#)

Proposal Review Checklist

Use these questions to guide discussions with prospective grant recipients to better understand how their trauma-informed approaches help build resilience. This grantmaking-focused checklist is intended to be used in conjunction with the expertise shared by the [National Child Traumatic Stress Network \(NCTSN\)](#).

- How does acute and/or chronic trauma impact the people your organization serves?
- Does the program address the underlying causes of trauma and/or the behavioral and developmental outcomes? How?
- Is the program culturally sensitive and adapted to fit the needs of its particular audience?
- Is the program based on an existing evidence-based intervention? (examples: [Trauma Systems Therapy](#) and [Attachment, Regulation and Competency](#))
- How, and with what frequency, is your staff provided with trauma-sensitivity training and support?
- Does your organization partner with other agencies to refer individuals for additional services or to learn best practices?

Grant Portfolio Strategy

An effective funding approach could include varying levels of intervention, focused on direct care, community building, or systems-level change. For each, consider these additional program elements.

Direct Service

One-on-one direct service settings, including clinical and youth development programs, should:

- Implement a standardized practice that has been proven effective for the population being served
- Address the “[core components](#)” of trauma-informed interventions

Funding opportunities: building relationships, creating safe environments to process trauma, increasing capacity of clinical settings to reduce waitlists

Community Building

Organizations that seek to address individual and community-wide trauma should:

- Listen to the community and engage people with relevant lived-experience in the program design
- Increase visibility of and access to services
- Work closely with a grassroots partner that has its ear to the ground

Funding opportunities: collaborations between organizations, group mentoring programs

Systems-Level

Trauma-informed systems, such as schools, healthcare settings, and the foster care and the criminal justice systems, should:

- Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand paths for recovery
- Respond appropriately by fully integrating knowledge into culturally responsive practices
- Include collaboration among all stakeholders interacting with a child
- Shift the framework and perspective that exists around trauma to reduce barriers to resilience

Funding opportunities: training the whole organization so that each touchpoint is trauma sensitive