

TRAUMA 101: BEST PRACTICES FOR CREATING A WORKPLACE THAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED AND KIND

SEPTEMBER 26, 2019
HEALTH CARE SUMMIT

Presenter Team

Amanda Perez Leder

Sr. Advisor, Education & Training, PPX
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Jade F. Hillery

Manager of Training, Education
Planned Parenthood Federation of America

Joann Schladale

Executive Director
Resources for Resolving Violence, Inc.

Agenda

1. What is Trauma and Why it matters? (3 mins)
2. Principles of Trauma-Informed Workplaces (3 mins)
3. Review of Workplace Themes #1-#5 & Best Practices (15 mins)
4. Reflection & Building on Our Strengths (8 mins)
5. Review of Workplace Themes #6-#10 & Best Practices (15 mins)
6. Reflection & Building on Our Strengths (8 mins)
7. Co-Developing Trauma-Informed Workplace Behaviors (30 mins)
8. Personal Commitment Exercise (5 mins)

Learning Objectives

By the end of this workshop, we expect participants to be able to:

- Recognize how trauma-informed principles provide an opportunity to foster a more caring and intentional workplace environment for all staff.
- Identify ways that all staff can create a more trauma-informed and kind environment across all work.
- Understand and explain why the integration of trauma-informed principles in the workplace is critical to employee experience.

What we mean by 'Trauma' . . .

Trauma. . .

results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening. . .

with lasting adverse effects on one's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

(Source: SAMHSA)

Why Trauma-Informed Practices at Planned Parenthood Matters. . .

- About two-thirds of us have had adverse childhood experiences, which is often higher in social serving organizations.
- Planned Parenthood as well as the communities we represent are presently experiencing unprecedented political opposition, hateful rhetoric, and violence -- all of which impacts our functioning, organizational and personal health, and well-being.
- Trauma-informed approaches can help to stop harm, promote healing, engage staff and patients, foster effective communication, and enhance resilient leadership.

Six Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Workplaces & Health Centers

- Safety
- Trustworthiness & Transparency
- Peer Support
- Collaboration & Mutuality
- Empowerment, Voice, & Choice
- Attention to cultural, historical, and gender issues

(Source: SAMHSA)

10 Best Practices for Trauma-Informed Workplace Practices: Our Development Process

- Evidence-based best practices from the field
- Companion document is “10 Best Practices for Delivering Trauma-Informed Care to Our Patients”
- 2019 Engagement Survey: Employee Comments

10 Best Practices for a Trauma-Informed Workplace

#1- Make a Connection Through Language

(SAMHSA principles: Safety + Transparency & Trustworthiness)

1. Greet others compassionately.
2. Communicate respectfully.
3. Avoid violent language and words that may cue trauma memories.

Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"Our CEO is always friendly and willing to meet with each person in our centers."

"I enjoy the emphasis on appreciating everyone as an individual, including respecting pronouns."

Room for Growth

"Learn more of our names!"

"I have heard that ____ cusses at her staff so horribly that staff will avoid working with her by calling out or asking to work elsewhere."

#2 - Acknowledge Trauma Experience with Caring Words *(SAMHSA principle: Safety)*

1. If a colleague discloses a traumatic experience, acknowledge experience with language that conveys care and support.
2. Acknowledge the role of opposition activity (protestors, political or violence) in impacting our sense of safety, particularly when there has been a change in the intensity.
3. Communicate about safety measures and the top commitment to employee and patient safety.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"Our CEO is a wonderful person who understands our needs. Our safety is top priority with her and everyone who works in our organization."

Room for Growth

"I am personally concerned about the lack of regard for staff safety at our offices. Protestors have gotten more aggressive and our protocols have stayed the same. I sometimes do not feel safe entering or leaving the offices."

#3 - Recognize Urgency and Accommodate

(SAMHSA principle: Transparency & Trustworthiness)

1. If a colleague discloses trauma and appears upset, give them a break, and obtain needed support services.
2. When asking colleagues to attend to urgent matters, be transparent, clarify the urgency, and provide as much context as possible.
3. When receiving urgent requests, inquire about flexibility and timelines, and ask for information pertinent to best accomplishing the task.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"What I like best is the level of transparency my supervisor offers. I don't feel blind-sided by decisions and always feel supported in my efforts and opinion. I have noticed in the past year, there is more transparency from Senior Leadership which helps keep us all better informed."

"More transparency will continue to lead to more trust."

Room for Growth

"I hardly ever get a direct answer when I ask questions. I feel like I can't do my job properly until I know the reasons behind why we do what we do."

"I think this organization could improve by setting aside a constant sense of urgency and really creating space, time and communication necessary to create new systems and try doing things differently. I know this is already the intention, but the actual flexibility isn't always there."

#4 - Foster Self-agency

(SAMHSA principles: Empowerment, Voice & Choice + Peer Support + Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues)

1. Allow colleagues as much control and choice as possible when managing a difficult situation.
2. Identify a support person to accompany a distressed colleague until they are able to manage on their own.
3. Maintain awareness of how cultural norms and personal experiences of trauma influence how we exercise control and make choices.

Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"Working for PP has empowered me to use my voice and taught me how to better advocate for my right and the rights of others. PP pushes me to question my surroundings and to think critically and intentionally about how to further the reproductive rights movement."

"I like that I have room for creativity and independence. I feel trusted."

Room for Growth

"I don't feel like I can communicate without being talked down to. I love PP but to be honest, I have never felt less empowered as a working woman here."

"We can do a better job at empowering staff at all levels to participate in decision-making to lessen the hierarchy."

"We work hard to empower our patients when we ourselves are powerless."

#5 - Minimize Non-Essential Touch

(SAMHSA principle: Safety + Transparency and Trustworthiness)

1. Workplace boundaries should minimize non-essential touch.
2. Develop and maintain harassment, anti-bullying, and retaliation policies and protocols.
3. Listen to and thank colleagues who share concerns about our workplace, and follow-up through established protocols.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

Room for Growth

*"When people talk about fear, **don't dismiss it.** Listen and work to remove the barriers."*

*"A lot of people are afraid of ____ because they have threatened to come after ____ if they are ever fired. **No one will stand up to ____ and tell them they're wrong.**"*

*"Hold all employees to the **same standards** of conduct."*

Reflection & Building on Our Strengths

Consider the first five Best Practices. Spend 8 minutes in your trios discussing:

1. Who is good at some of these behaviors -- and what specifically do they do or say?
2. Which of these need more of our attention and can make a large impact for our workplace?

#6 - Practice Asking For and Observing Consent

(SAMHSA principle: Collaboration & Mutuality + Safety)

1. Ask about your colleague's needs and preferences when having discussions about work plans, performance, feedback, and recognition - and meet needs as much as possible.
2. Ask permission to talk about sensitive matters - and intrusive conversations.
3. Seek continued consent by observing carefully for concerns and checking-in with colleagues.
4. Ask permission before volunteering a colleague for an opportunity or to jump in on a task.
5. Invite colleagues to share their ideas, especially those impacted by the decision at hand.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

Room for Growth

*"Less top-down management. **Seek more input** from those who will be directly affected by changes."*

*"More effort from management team to engage staff regarding decision that impact them. **Less surprises.**"*

*"**Empathy, collaboration, and communication are sorely lacking here** and it is no wonder we have such an epic turnover rate."*

#7 - Be Deliberate About Workplace Environment

(SAMHSA principles: Safety + Empowerment, Voice & Choice)

1. Ensure that colleagues who are more likely to experience vicarious trauma understand its potential impact and how to self-care.
2. Eliminate all media content that is offensive or violent.
3. Make trauma-informed and healing resources accessible.
4. Enthusiastically foster an environment that embraces and promotes diversity of identities, thoughts, and experiences - as well as equity and inclusion.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"I am proud to be part of an organization that is striving to improve the work culture and environment for their employees. I love that I can be a mom and be free to mother, as well as respected and engaged in my work."

"I can be who I am and not worry. I know that I am respected as a person. I get to help people just like myself."

Room for Growth

"We set employees up for failure by not giving them adequate training."

"We just get thrown into our positions like we're supposed to know everything already."

"My person of color colleagues report much different work experiences here. We need to have all of us, commit to actively dismantling systemic, institutional racism. The primarily white C-suite needs to realize no one wants to take away their power, rather we want to expand it to be more inclusive."

#8 - Clear the Slate

(SAMHSA principle: Peer Support)

1. Take a few seconds to breathe deeply in between meetings, appointments, and during intense encounters to stay centered, focused, and reduce stress hormones.
2. When a colleague is struggling, create opportunities for providing caring feedback and training to promote growth without shame or blame.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"Most of all I feel like I can try things to learn and innovate."

"We have moments of disagreement and conflict but I know outside our doors my team has my back."

Room for Growth

"There is too much shaming in our organization. SLT needs to work on more compassion and vulnerability when it comes to leading so this trickles down to the rest of the organization. People need to be held accountable for bad behavior."

#9 - Practice Self-Care

(SAMHSA principles: Peer Support + Empowerment, Voice & Choice + Historical, Cultural, and Gender Issues)

1. Recognize when you are experiencing difficulty, take a break, and seek support from colleagues.
2. Remind each other to take care of ourselves on a regular basis.
3. Recognize signs of burnout in yourself and others, take them seriously, and create a prevention plan.
4. Acknowledge trauma cues from news stories, politics, and current events that impact us.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"My supervisor is compassionate and prioritizes self-care every day. Without my director's support this job would cause lots of burnout."

Room for Growth

"We need to seriously address burnout. There is a weird thing happening where we acknowledge the role mental health plays in wellness, but ignore the amount of people normalizing having work-related nightmares, crying in bathrooms and closets, and having real anxiety and visibly panicking ALL THE TIME. It's terrible."

"Be aware and responsive publicly to what's happening in the world that is affecting staff and patients."

#10 - Seek Continuous Feedback

(SAMHSA principle: Transparency & Trustworthiness)

1. Ask each other for input on work performance.
2. If you think you said something insensitive or disrespectful, check-in and accept any constructive feedback with gratitude.



Employee Survey Comments

Kudos

"I like that the organization provides platforms for employee feedback and truly tries to address what they can."

Room for Growth

"We would benefit from having leaders who are able to hear feedback and not be defensive."

"White identified staff (regardless of position) need to hear and validate the experiences of staff of color without getting defensive. I see it all the time and it concerns me because we are losing staff of color all the time."

Reflection & Building on Our Strengths

Consider the last five Best Practices. Spend 8 minutes in your trios discussing:

1. Who is good at some of these behaviors -- and what specifically do they do or say?
2. Which of these need more of our attention and can make a large impact in the workplace?

Co-Developing Trauma-Informed Workplace Behaviors

- In groups of 4, let's identify *behaviors* staff can practice to embody the best practices.
- Each group will be assigned 2 best practices.
- *Everyone* has a role to play in creating a trauma-informed workplace! Identify practices that apply to *all* staff.
- Assign someone to be the Notetaker & record ideas on the Worksheet. We will collect them!



1. Make a Connection Through Language

- Greet patients in a warm and welcoming way.
- Reference patient history for any past trauma. Ask all patients if examinations/procedures are challenging for them.
- Avoid terms that may serve as trauma cues.
- Ensure inquiries about safety and sexual history are always open-ended questions.
- **You can:**
 - Allow patients who may be anxious the opportunity to share: "Many patients are anxious about examinations or procedures. What concerns do you have about today's visit?"
 - Avoid terms like "spread your legs", "bed", or "just relax".

2. Acknowledge Trauma Experience with Caring Words

- If a patient discloses an assault experience, acknowledge their experience with language that conveys care and support.
- You can:**
- Use caring words: "I am very sorry to hear you went through that. How can I be helpful?"
 - Make a referral: "If you ever want to speak with a social worker or counselor about your assault, this organization has great professionals who are always there to listen."



Make a Connection

3. Recognize Urgency and Accommodate

- If a patient discloses an assault experience and appears acutely upset, pause the flow of the encounter and practice flexibility in regular workflow in order to meet their needs.
- You can:**
- Use caring words and a supportive tone: "I'm sorry to hear that. Thank you for trusting us with this information. We'll be sure to provide you with the care you need today."
 - Offer to contact a rape crisis program for immediate in-clinic assistance if patient wishes.



Acknowledge the Reality

4. Foster Self-agency

- Give patients as much control and choice as possible throughout the visit.
- Meet and engage in conversations with patients first while they are dressed.
- Allow a companion or support person to accompany the patient.

You can:

- Remind the patient they are in control: "I will stop if you ask, although there will be a point where I'll need to complete the procedure. I will let you know before we reach that point."



Keep Them in the Loop

*This companion document includes behaviors and language script suggestions.

Closing Gratitude Activity

1. Record your response to this question:
 - *“How has this time together been helpful?”*
2. Find someone you don't know well and share your reflections.
3. Two-three pair groups will share with the large group.