Guidelines for Applying a Trauma Lens to a Child Welfare Practice Model

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Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System
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1. Maximize physical and psychological safety for children and families.
2. Identify trauma-related needs of children and families.
3. Enhance child well-being and resilience.
4. Enhance family well-being and resilience.
5. Enhance the well-being and resilience of those working in the system.
6. Partner with youth and families.
7. Partner with agencies and systems that interact with children and families.
This guide is a tool intended to help states and other jurisdictions incorporate the best science and knowledge about child and family trauma into their casework practice models, as well as helping child welfare administrators, supervisors, and workers implement trauma-informed strategies in their daily work.
Structure of the Guide

- **Overview.** Provides an overview of the particular stage in casework practice.

- **Importance of Addressing Trauma.** Highlights the importance of having a trauma-informed lens during this particular stage in casework practice.

- **Trauma-Informed Policies and Administrative Strategies.** Provides concrete policies that can be implemented by child welfare administrators.

- **Trauma-Informed Supervisory Strategies.** Provides concrete suggestions on strategies that child welfare supervisors can use to make their practice more trauma-informed.

- **Trauma-Informed Practices.** Provides concrete suggestions on strategies that caseworkers can use to make their practice more trauma-informed.

- **Community Examples.** Some sections highlight specific community examples of programs that have integrated policies and/or practices within this particular stage of their casework practice.
APPLYING A TRAUMA LENS TO A CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE MODEL

Reporting suspected child abuse

Investigation/Fact Finding

Safety Planning

Initial assessment (risk and protective factors, family strengths and needs)

Closed with no referrals

Out-of-home placement

In-home services

Closed with referral to community services

Participatory case planning

Case management (including referrals, coordinating services, and case monitoring)

Permanency planning

Stay with parents/reunification

Adoption

Guardianship

Independent Living

Post-permanency supports

Responsibilities to Mitigate the Impact of Trauma

Agency
- Mission, vision, and core values
- Underlying theoretical framework/rationale for the practice model
- Policy
- Practice principles
- Standards of professional practice
- Staff development and retention
- Evaluation of desired outcomes
- Evaluation of practice model impact on outcomes

Supervision
- Coaching staff and case consultation
- Monitoring staff performance and activities
- Monitoring and supporting staff safety and well-being
- Addressing secondary traumatic stress
- Monitoring worker fidelity to practice model
- Documentation
Cross-Cutting Issues

- Child Safety
- Family Engagement, Partnership, and Shared Decision-Making
- Strength-Focused Practice
- Ongoing Assessment and Planning
- Staff Well-Being and Support
- Community Partnership
Chronology of Child Welfare Work

- Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect
- Investigation/Fact Finding
- Safety Planning
- Assessment of Family Functioning
- In-Home Family Support Services
- Removal and Initial Placement

- Out-of-Home Placement
- Visitation/Parenting Time
- Participatory Case Planning
- Case Management
- Permanency Planning
- Reunification
- Adoption and Guardianship
- Post-Permanency Supports
- Transitioning into Adulthood
EXAMPLE - REPORTING CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT
Trauma-Informed Policies and Administrative Strategies - Oklahoma

- State plan-that has a Trauma-Informed Care Focus
- Mission, vision, and Goals for Trauma-Informed Care system change
- Collaboration with other state agencies particularly the State Mental Health agency which also is focusing on trauma informed services,
- Initiating the process of reviewing policies and practices to be trauma informed-5 year implementation plan,
Trauma-Informed Supervisory Strategies - Oklahoma

- Beginning discussions on Worker Resiliency and Optimism
- Plans for Supervisory Unit based instruction and support for workers.
Trauma-Informed Practices

- Ask about any prior history of trauma when taking reports
- Be alert for signs of traumatic stress in children when taking reports (e.g., nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive thoughts, repetitive traumatic play, heightened arousal, being “on edge,” avoidance of trauma reminders, emotional numbing)
CTISP Products

- Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Toolkit
  - *Trauma System Readiness Tool and focus group questions*
  - *Guidelines for Applying a Trauma Lens to a Child Welfare Practice Model*
  - *Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Mental Health for Child Welfare*
  - *Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Child Welfare for Mental Health*

- Available online at [www.ctisp.org](http://www.ctisp.org) by March 31, 2013
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