

## TRAUMA

- ⇒ An event *or*
- ⇒ A series of events *or*
- ⇒ Set of circumstances

Experienced by a person as

- ⇒ Physically harmful *or*
- ⇒ Emotionally harmful *or*
- ⇒ Life threatening

And has lasting adverse effects on a person's

- ⇒ Functioning and
- ⇒ Mental well-being *or*
- ⇒ Physical well-being *or*
- ⇒ Social well-being *or*
- ⇒ Emotional well-being *or*
- ⇒ Spiritual well-being

(SAMHSA)

Parents often have their own trauma history. Unresolved issues may lead to:

- Failure to engage in needed services
- Increase in symptoms
- Retraumatization
- Relapse
- Withdraw from service relationships
- Poor treatment outcomes
- Avoidance or withdraw from supportive individuals including family

## Building Connections : (to the child)

1. Tell me about something good that's happened recently.
2. What have you learned at school this week?
3. What is your favorite (song, sport, television show, etc.)?

## To the caseworker or other professional :

1. How was the child screened for trauma?
2. Is there a need for an assessment?
3. Has there been an assessment?
4. What was the result of the assessment?
5. Have the recommendations been implemented?

*"The system shall recognize and address the trauma a child experiences as a result of abuse & neglect and as a result of placement."*

PA Mission and Guiding Principles

## If treatment for trauma was indicated:

1. Is the child currently in treatment?
2. Is the clinician skilled in providing trauma treatment?
3. Is the treatment specifically addressing the trauma?
4. How is the child responding?
5. Is the child being prescribed psychotropic medication?

## If so, ask the Blue Box Questions

### WHEN A CHILD IS ON PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

What is the child's diagnosis? Is it the correct diagnosis?

What is the medication's intended effect? Is it effective?

Are we monitoring for adverse effects?

If doing well, have we thought about tapering the medication?

What is the opinion of the treating physician?

6. Are the professionals on the case communicating and working as a team?

## BEING TRAUMA-INFORMED

### In the Court room:

Create a calm environment

Begin in a timely manner

Welcome people and thank them for coming

Insist on starting with strengths

Assume trauma

Be respectful and courteous

Use plain language

Check for understanding

Be aware of possible trauma triggers

Don't allow badgering, aggressive language or intimidation

Use therapy or comfort dogs

Allow comfort objects and support people to be present

Have distractions such as snacks, coloring pages, small toys or puzzles available for the children.

Reframe a situation as an opportunity for personal growth

Use supportive and hopeful language

### Outside the Court room:

Create safe waiting areas

Know your biases

Assess how trauma-informed the court & county systems currently are

Bring issues related to becoming trauma-informed to the local children's roundtable

Encourage development of trauma informed resources as needed

Look for the strengths in people

Take care of yourself

## PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED SYSTEMS

### Safety

~ physical and emotional ~

### Trustworthiness &

### Transparency

~ building and maintaining trust ~

### Peer Support

~ individuals with lived trauma  
experience ~

### Collaboration & Mutuality

~ working together and sharing  
power ~

### Empowerment, Voice & Choice

~ to make decisions, prioritize  
competencies and  
experience a sense of control ~

### Culture, Historical and Gender Issues

~ addressing bias in or to be  
more responsive ~

## USING SUPPORTIVE AND HOPEFUL LANGUAGE

- What has happened to you?
- What do you think?
- What can we do to help you solve the problem?
- Your commitment really shows.
- It's clear you're trying to change.
- Sounds like you are saying...
- What do you need to help you get to (the goal)?
- Tell me something good.
- Thank you for coming today.

## CALM BREATHING EXERCISE

- Sit comfortably
- Take a slow breath in through your nose to the count of 3
- Hold breath to the count of 2
- Exhale slowly through your mouth to the count of 5
- Wait 2 seconds
- Repeat as many times as needed, typically 5 to 10 times