

Trauma Informed Care

For Food Pantries and Meal Sites

Cheryl Thiede

AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin

Session Objectives

- Introduce concept of Trauma-Informed Care
- Learn how Trauma affects those we help
- Begin to think about how to adapt a Trauma Informed Approach to your Pantry/Meal Site

“I've learned that people will forget what you said,
people will forget what you did, but people will
never forget how you made them feel.”

Maya Angelou

Trauma

In this approach, Trauma is defined as ..

a very difficult or unpleasant experience that causes someone to have mental or emotional problems usually for a long time

Trauma affects individuals, families and communities. It can be one event, a series of events or an ongoing condition.

Change the approach

It's not “What's wrong with you?”

But instead it's “What happened to you?”

Causes of Trauma

- Violence
- Abuse
- Adverse Childhood Events
- Poverty
- Stigma
- Discrimination
- Racism
- Sexism
- War
- Accidents

Why is a Trauma Informed Approach Important at Food Pantries/Meal Programs?

- People who have experienced traumatic life events are often *very sensitive* to situations that remind them of the people, places or things involved in their traumatic event
- These reminders, also known as triggers, may cause a person to relive the trauma and view your agency as a source of distress rather than a place of assistance and safety
- Because we CARE
- Good Customer Service!

Behavior = Symptom of Trauma

Trauma affects behavior. Simply said, it can cause a certain response in a situation. Someone may not even be aware of the connection between the past trauma and their reaction to the current situation. The response can be any of these, or many others:

- Irritability
- Helplessness
- Anger
- Disconnection
- Non-Compliance

The Three R's of a Trauma Informed Approach

- *Realizing* the prevalence of trauma
- *Recognizing* how trauma affects our clients
- *Responding* by putting this knowledge into practice

What are the Key Principles of a Trauma-Informed Approach?

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Collaboration and mutuality
- Empowerment, voice, and choice
- Cultural, historical and gender issues

~ SAMHSA ~



Circle of Care in Trauma Informed Care

State of Wisconsin DHS



Communicating in a trauma-informed way

- “What has happened to you?”
- “What do you think?”
- “What can we do to solve the problem?”
- “Please.”
- “I see that you are upset, I know how difficult this may be for you, let’s take a deep breath to calm down”
- “Your commitment really shows.”
- “It’s clear you are trying to change.”
- “Despite what happened before, you have been able to...”
- “I know that you have worked hard to follow the rules.”
- “I’d like to refer you to a resource who may be able to help you.”
- “I can see you are confused”
- “I can hear you are frustrated.”
- “It sounds like you are saying...”

Clients who feel heard and understood are more likely to demonstrate greater:

- Sense of safety
- Adherence
- Engagement
- Productive behavior
- Positive outcomes



How to Start

Learn more!

- Read up on TIC
- Train your volunteers & staff
 - Start simple and discuss the concept at a meeting
 - Bring in a trainer (many area mental health providers are trained in TIC)
 - Share articles
- Review Pantry Procedures through a *Trauma Informed lens*
- Monitor responses during service delivery
 - “Catch” people doing well and reinforce the behavior
 - “Staff” situations after they happen and talk about using a different response next time

Remember ..

α Walking in the door of a food program is already difficult. Asking for help for a basic need, admitting they need help = shame, guilt, feelings of unworthiness or failure.

± Add to that that our clients walk in the door with all of their past experiences wrapped around them. Poverty, discrimination, abuse.

► Work on a service delivery model that embraces **Respect, Trust, Safety and Empowerment** to ensure those in need get help, return for help, and respond well to services.

Resources

State of Wisconsin DHS <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/tic/index.htm>

Trauma Informed Care Project www.traumainformedcareproject.org

National Center for Trauma Informed Care www.samhsa.gov/nctic

Emotional CPR <http://emotional-cpr.org/resources.htm>

Contact Information

Cheryl Thiede

Cheryl.Thiede@arcw.org

(715) 836-7710 ext. 3213