OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION

2021 TRIBAL YOUTH VIRTUAL NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Strengthening Resilience, Promoting Healing, Restoring Culture

SHAPING BRIGHTER FUTURES WITH AMERICAN INDIAN, ALASKA NATIVE YOUTH AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

MARCH 29 - APRIL 2
Building an Indigenous Resilience-Focused Lens, Part One
Monday, March 29, 2021
10:15am AKT/ 11:15am PT/ 12:15pm MT/ 1:15pm CT/ 2:15pm ET

Session Facilitators:
Laura Guay, National Native Children’s Trauma Center
Ashley Trautman, National Native Children’s Trauma Center
Opening in a Good Way

A spark of kindness made a light.
The light made an opening in the darkness.

Once the World Was Perfect
By Joy Harjo
Today’s Facilitators

Laura Guay
Training & Technical Assistance Manager

Ashley Trautman
Juvenile Justice Training & Technical Assistance Specialist
Think Trauma: A Training for Working with Justice-Involved Youth

Developed by The National Child Trauma Stress Network Juvenile Justice Consortium
Overview

Module One: Trauma and Justice Involvement
Module Two: Trauma’s Impact on Development
Module Three: Trauma in Context & Coping
Module Four: Trauma & Staff Wellness
Why Think Trauma?

• How we explain behavior is directly linked to how we handle it.

• Trauma is not an excuse for behavior but an explanation for it.

• Understanding the impact of trauma gives us more tools to do our job, make everyone safer, and help youth build healthier lives and better futures.
Learning Objectives

• Define trauma and describe how it differs from everyday stress

• View behaviors through a trauma lens

• Better understand the role of resilience and recovery in buffering the effects of traumatic events and promoting health and development
What is a potentially traumatic event?

Exposure:
How a person experiences a potentially traumatic event can vary from person to person, but with trauma the event is experienced as harmful.

✓ Consider how experiencing a traumatic event impacts how youth feel in detention.

Experiences:
How a person experiences a potentially traumatic event can vary from person to person, but with trauma the event is experienced as harmful.

Effects:
Traumatic events can have short and/or long-term adverse effects on a person's physical, emotional, educational, and spiritual health that may show up immediately or later in a person's life.

What You Can Do:
Ask yourself has the youth experienced a traumatic event.
93% of juvenile offenders reported at least one or more traumatic experiences and on average reporting at least 6, with traumatic loss representing the most common exposure.
Preparing for Action

- Tensed muscles
- Breathing rate increases
- Digestion slows
- Heart rate and blood pressure increase
- Release of adrenaline and cortisol
Understanding the Brain

**Survival Brain**
- Seeing threat
- Remembering danger
- Preparing to protect

**Learning Brain**
- Controlling impulses
- Thinking through decisions and effective protection strategies
Establishing Safety

What You Can Do:

- Help youth feel safer by being present and engaged.
- Create predictability.
- Balance firmness with caring.

The first step to connect with youth in a trauma-informed manner is to help them feel physically and psychologically safe.
Creating a Trauma-Informed Safety Plan

Safety plans should include:

- A trauma-informed safety plan is one tool that all staff may use to collaborate with a youth who has experienced trauma.
- Brief trauma history
- Trauma reminders
- Early warning signs of losing control
- Calming & regulating behaviors

This is usually a plan shared between staff and youth to help youth use healthier coping strategies.
Trauma Reminders or Triggers

Things, events, situations, places, sensations, and even people that a youth consciously or unconsciously connects with a traumatic event.
Calming the Survival Brain

Youth affected by trauma may:

**What You Can Do**
- Expect others to compromise their safety.
- List the actions an adult does to make youth feel unsafe and activate their survival brain.
- Try to feel safe and protect themselves in ways that are risky, dangerous, or destructive.
- Consider some ways you and your co-workers can avoid behaviors that make youth feel unsafe.

Youth affected by trauma may:

• Expect others to compromise their safety.
• Try to feel safe and protect themselves in ways that are risky, dangerous, or destructive.
• Can learn new ways to feel safe from firm and caring adults who are aware of trauma reminders.
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Traumatic Stress Reactions

- Re-Experiencing
- Avoidance
- Hyperarousal/Reactivity
- Negative alteration in cognition/mood
- Dissociation
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Re-Experiencing Symptoms

Intrusive images, sensations, or memories of the traumatic event recur uncontrollably.

This includes:

• Nightmares
• Disturbing thoughts
• Flashbacks
• Physiological reactions
• Intense/prolonged psychological distress
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Avoidance Symptoms

Avoidance of internal reminders:
• Thoughts, feelings, or physical sensations

Avoidance of external reminders:
• People, places, objects
• Activities, situations, conversations
• Avoid discussing related issues
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Alterations in Arousal & Reactivity

- Irritable or aggressive behavior
- Self-destructive or reckless behavior
- Jumpiness or quick to startle
- Problems with concentration
- Sleep disturbance
- Hyperarousal/hypervigilance
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Negative Alterations in Cognition & Mood

- Inability to remember parts of traumatic event
- Persistent negative emotions
- Persistent difficulty experiencing positive emotions
- Decreased interest or participation in activities
- Feeling detached from others
- Persistent exaggerated negative expectations
- Persistent distorted blame of self or others
How Youth Respond to Trauma: Dissociation

- Feeling unreal and disconnected from self
- Mentally separating the self from the experience
- May experience the self as detached from the body, on the ceiling, or somewhere else in the room
- May feel as if in a dream or unreal state
Rates of Trauma & PTSD in JJ Youth

93% of juvenile offenders reported at least one or more traumatic experiences and on average reporting at least 6.

Youth in the JJ population have rates of PTSD comparable to those of service members returning from Iraq.

40% of youth with trauma history are diagnosed with at least one other mood, anxiety or disruptive behavior disorder.
Understanding Trauma & Preventing Re-Offending

Identifying trauma can improve risk assessment for further offending and lead to rehabilitative services that work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk</th>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Responsivity</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Determining the likelihood for re-offending and type of services that will rehabilitate.</td>
<td>Targeted provision of services that are matched to specific risks for re-offending using effective and proven tools.</td>
<td>Youth’s ability to rehabilitate is maximized by tailoring services to youth needs and strengths.</td>
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Mental Health Disorders’ Role in Responding to Trauma

Rates of Mental Health (MH) Disorders

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of MH Disorder</th>
<th>% with MH Diagnosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive Disorders (i.e. Conduct Disorder)</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use Disorders</td>
<td>46.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorders</td>
<td>34.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood Disorders</td>
<td>18.3%</td>
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</tbody>
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What are barriers to working with mental health professionals and communicating with them about youth?

What improves working with mental health professionals and helps communication with them about youth?
## Understanding Resilience & Managing Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assets</th>
<th>Resources</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Self-efficacy</td>
<td>• Family support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Self-esteem</td>
<td>• Peer support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Competence</td>
<td>• Community connections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Spiritual belief</td>
<td>• School connectedness</td>
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</table>

What specific assets or resources do you think support youth who have experienced trauma?
Rebuilding Beyond Survival

What You Can Do:

✓ Not take their behavior personally.
✓ Youth whose functioning declines due to trauma exposure can recover when given opportunities to rebuild their lives.
✓ Let them know it is okay to feel upsetting feelings.
✓ Help translate their behavior into feelings and words they can express in a healthy way.
✓ Work with them to reduce or avoid unnecessary reminders.
✓ Invite youth to share what is most frustrating about stressful situations and brainstorm healthy ways to deal with it that addresses it directly.
What are things you can do or say to help youth feel safe?
Understanding Trauma’s Impact on Development
Learning Objectives

• Describe how trauma impacts *attachment* and *relationships*

• Identify key *adolescent developmental tasks* and *competencies*

• Describe how trauma can *derail* *developmental progression*
Trauma and Factors that Influence Its Impact

Trauma refers to events that a person experiences as extremely harmful or life threatening and potentially has short or long-term harmful effects on the person.

**3 E’s of trauma exposure:**
- Events
- Experiences
- Effects

**Age of the youth**

**Trauma history:**
- Direct victim or Witness
- Secondary adversities

**Trauma at the hand of caregivers**

**Secondary adversities**
Protection and Injury

• Stage of development and life experiences shape the way youth perceive protection and safety.

• Each traumatic experience can cause invisible wounds that can change how a child develops.

• Youth recover from these wounds through relationships they build with healthy adults.
Complex Trauma: Trauma Exposure & Development Impact

Domains of Impact:
- Chronic and/or multiple traumas
- Interpersonal trauma often caused by a caregiver or other trusted adult
- Trauma typically begins at a very young age
- Emotion Regulation
- Behavioral Regulation
- Self-Concept & Future Orientation/Worldview

- Attachment & Relationships
- Biological & Physical
- Cognition
Impact of Multiple Traumas: Complex Trauma & Victimization

- Bullied at School
- Complex trauma involves being victimized and often exposed to multiple types of violence.
- Exposure to community violence
- Exposure to violence and victimization can include experiences outside the home in settings such as the community or school.
- Sexual victimization by a stranger or acquaintance outside of home
- Living in a home with a parent who uses substances

Nowhere is safe or feels safe!
Trauma’s Impact on Attachment & Relationships

- Continued expectation of maltreatment or abandonment
- Persistent distrust and suspiciousness of others
- Isolation and withdrawal
- Difficulty in perspective-taking and enlisting others as allies
- Difficulty with establishing appropriate social boundaries
- Frequently marked by violence
Trauma’s Impact on Healthy Physical Development

• Body development can be more distressing.

• Hormones may modify mood-behavior.

• Body may serve as a trauma reminder.

• Alcohol and substance abuse can also be ways of trying to control changing emotions and physical sensations.

• Changes in the stress response can occur.
Key Adolescent Developmental Tasks: Cognitive Development

During adolescence, individuals:

• Develop a greater capacity for abstract thought
• Take in a great deal of new information, retain it, and apply it to effectively problem-solve and achieve academically as well as in other developmental areas
Cognition refers to a range of mental processes including:

- Acquiring information
- Storing information for a short or long period of time
- Manipulating the information – meaning that you can use the information to complete another task and hold on to it at the same time
- Retrieving the information when you need to use it
Trauma Interference with Functioning & Managing Danger

- Has difficulty sustaining attention
- Has memory impairments that make it hard to hold onto information and use it to solve problems
- Has trauma reactions that interfere with test-taking and the ability to remember learned information
- Looking for danger which impedes their ability to focus

When discussing trauma, one of the most important functions of both the survival and learning brain is dealing with danger from the outside world.

Photo Credit: http://communityresiliencecookbook.org/your-body-brain/
Trauma’s Impact of Decision-Making

Reasons for poor decision-making for trauma-exposed youth may include:

- Misinterprets people and situations as threatening
- Has less self-control and difficulty thinking through consequences of decisions
- Is drawn to peers may be inexperienced at dealing with problems in healthy ways
- Has increased sensitivity to rewards during adolescence may make the above worse

Complex trauma can negatively impact short- and long-term decision making.
New experiences with trusted adults and peers can help youth to develop alternative views of themselves, the world, and others.
Activity: Building Trust

• What is the impact of trauma on their relationships?

• What is the impact of trauma on their physical and cognitive development?

• How would you build trust with your youth?
Key Adolescent Developmental Tasks: Emotional & Behavioral Development

During adolescence, individuals:

• Have increased awareness and sensitivity to the emotional experiences of others and themselves

• Develop increased impulse control and wider range of behaviors to problem solve
Trauma’s Impact on Emotional Development

• Difficulty with self-regulation
• Difficulty describing feelings/internal states
• Difficulty communicating wishes and desires
Is it really anger?
Behavioral Regulation
Trauma’s Impact on Behavioral Development

Youth who have experienced significant trauma may have difficulty:

- Making realistic appraisals of danger and safety
- Governing behavior to meet longer-term goals

As a result, these adolescents may engage in:

- Reckless and risk-taking behavior
- Become avoidant of any risk
Getting Development Back on Track:
Promoting Empowerment

Opportunities to develop a healthy sense of control over their lives builds resilience and counters the impact of trauma on their view of themselves, others, and the world.
Empowerment & Accountability Through Restorative Practices

• Traumatic experiences may explain behaviors that led to justice-involvement, but do not lessen the impact these behaviors had on victims of youth crime.

• Restorative justice provides tools to help youth repair the damage caused by their actions.

• Providing opportunities to repair damage allows youth to remain accountable while developing skills that will help them recover from the impact of their trauma.
Helping Youth Get Back on Track

Know you make a difference, even if you don’t see the final result.
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Session Evaluation

Please remember to fill out the workshop evaluation.

**Workshop Information:**
Monday, March 29, 2021
10:15am AKT/ 11:15am PT/ 12:15pm MT/ 1:15pm CT/ 2:15pm ET
Session A2: Building an Indigenous Resilience-Focused Lens, Part One
Everyone worked together to make a ladder.

*Once the World Was Perfect*

By Joy Harjo
This project was supported by Grant #2018-MU-MU-K001 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication/program/exhibition are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.