



CTISP

Chadwick Trauma-Informed Systems Project

# Creating a Practice Model for Trauma-Informed Child Welfare

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# Objectives



Participants will be able to:

- Identify the key elements of a child welfare practice model
- Name the Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice
- Identify critical challenges to implementing trauma-informed practice in child welfare

# Chadwick Trauma-Informed Systems Project (CTISP)



SAMHSA funded (2010-2013) as  
Category II NCTSN Site

## Goals

- Provide leadership in identifying effective treatments and developing specialized service delivery models to children in the public child welfare system who have been victims of abuse and/or domestic violence
- Support the evolution of public child welfare agencies into trauma-informed organizations and agents of change in their communities, starting with 3 laboratory sites
- Transform the wider child welfare system into a multi-dimensional, trauma-informed, evidence-based system

# CTISP Products



- Policy Guide for Trauma-Informed Child Welfare
- Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Services for Child Welfare Supervisors
- Desk Guide on Trauma-Informed Child Welfare for Mental Health
- Trauma-Informed Casework Practice Model Adaptation Guidelines
- Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Policy Toolkit

# Definition of Trauma-Informed System



*A trauma-informed child welfare system is one in which all parties involved recognize and respond to the varying impact of traumatic stress on children, caregivers and those who have contact with the system. Programs and organizations within the system infuse this knowledge, awareness and skills into their organizational cultures, policies, and practices. They act in collaboration, using the best available science, to facilitate and support resiliency and recovery.*

- CTISP National Advisory Committee

# Viewing Child Welfare Practice Thorough a Trauma Lens



A PARTNER IN  
**NCTSN**

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

# Video: "We Carry It with Us"



Kingdom County Productions presents

Mature themes

## Ask Us Who We Are

Foster Care in Vermont  
The search for family and a sense of belonging  
A new documentary film  
by Bess O'Brien

For more information call 802-592-3190 • [www.kingdomcounty.com](http://www.kingdomcounty.com)

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The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

# Implementation of Trauma-Informed Practices



- Paper
- Policy
- Practice

# What Is a Practice Model?



A model of practice includes the definition of the need or problem that requires action, the variables to be considered in assessment and decision making, and the intervention methods and strategies necessary to achieve the desired outcome.

Child Welfare Institute, 1998

# What Is a Practice Model?

(continued)



A practice model is a conceptual map and organizational ideology which describes the values and principles underlying the agency's work with children and families, as well as specific approaches and techniques they consider basic to achieving desired outcomes. It should make an explicit link connecting the agency's policy and practice with its mission, vision, and core values.

# Practice Model Framework



- Practice – the values, principles, relationships, approaches and techniques used at the system and casework practitioner level to enable children and families to achieve the goals of safety, stability, permanency and well-being.
- Framework – a structure to hold together or support something; an underlying set of ideas: a set of ideas, principles, agreements or rules that provides the basis or outline for something intended to be more fully developed at a later stage.

# Elements of a Practice Model



- Agency mission, vision, and values
- Practice principles
- Standards of professional practice
- Strategies and tools for integrating values, practice principals, and standards of professional practice into daily practice
- Plan for assessing service needs and engaging families
- Strategies to measure family, agency, and worker outcomes
- Plan for supporting organizational and practice change

National Child Welfare Resource Center for Organizational Improvement

# Elements of a Practice Model (continued)



- Core principles, agency values, and standards of professional practice.
- Strategies and functions to achieve the core principles, values, and standards.
- Plan for assessing service needs and engaging families.
- Strategies to measure family outcomes and agency

# Additional Practice Model Elements

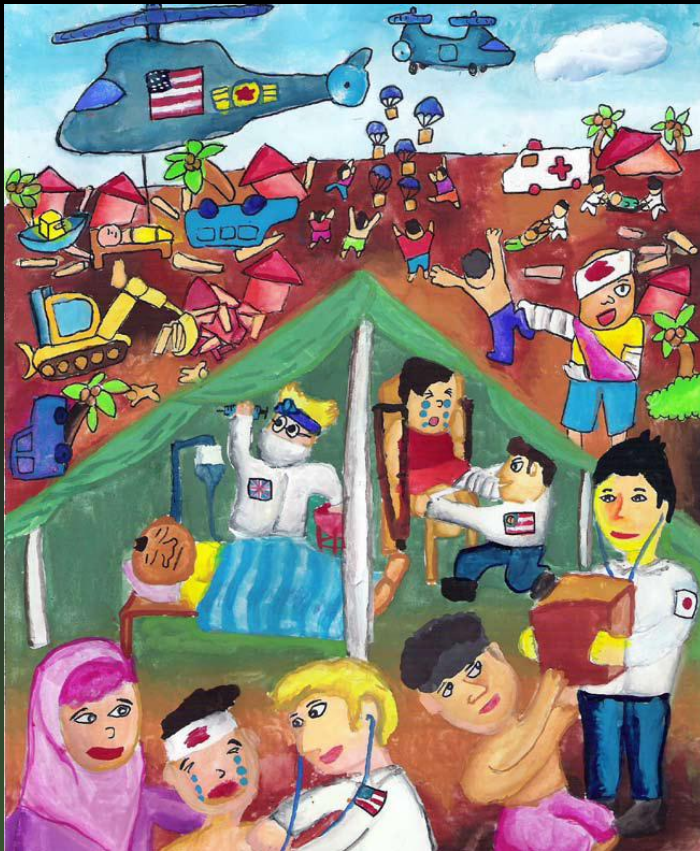


- A clear description of the agency's performance outcomes
- A statement of the agency's assumptions and beliefs about factors in the ecosystem that must be influenced to achieve these outcomes
- A statement of the strategies of intervention most likely to successfully influence these factors and the evidence supporting the strategies

# Call for Trauma-Informed Child Serving Systems



What realistic and practical actions can be taken at all levels of the system to understand and address trauma to make it better for the children, families, and workforce?



Artwork courtesy of the International Child Art Foundation ([www.icaf.org](http://www.icaf.org))

# Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice



## 1) Maximize the child's sense of safety

- Physical and psychological safety
- Concept of triggers

## 2) Utilize comprehensive assessment

- Assess child's traumatic experiences
- Assess impact on the child's development and behavior
- Let assessment guide services when appropriate

## 3) Assist children in reducing overwhelming emotion

# Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice



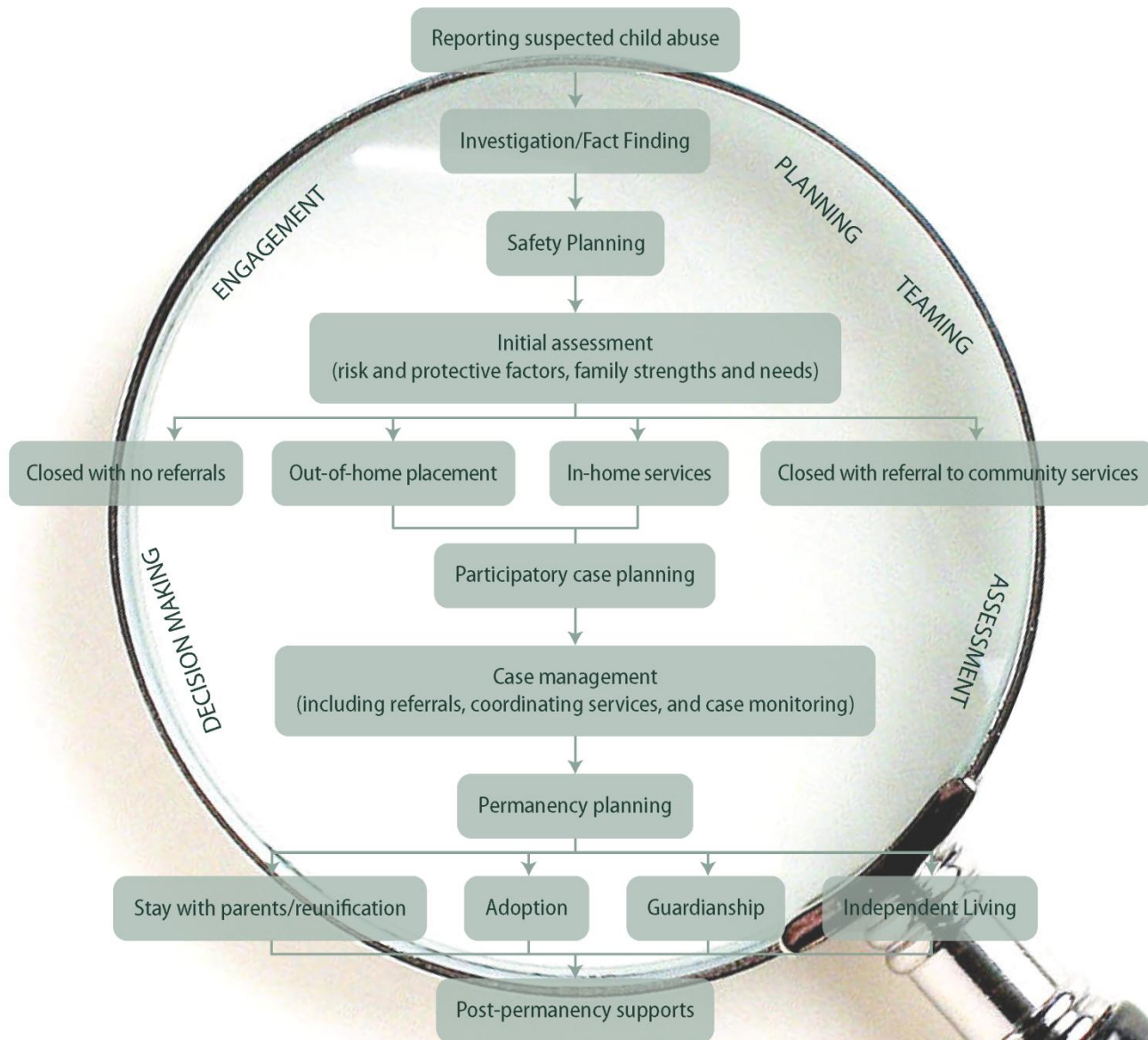
- 4) Address any impact of trauma and subsequent changes in
  - Child's behavior
  - Development
  - Relationships
- 5) Help children make new meaning of their trauma history and current experiences
- 6) Coordinate services with other agencies
- 7) How and when to apply the right evidence-based treatments

# Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice



- 8) Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child
- 9) Provide support and guidance to child's family and caregivers
- 10) Recognize that many of the child's adult caregivers are trauma victims as well (recent and childhood trauma)
- 11) Manage professional and personal stress
  - Vicarious Trauma

# APPLYING A TRAUMA LENS TO A CHILD WELFARE PRACTICE MODEL



## 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

# Guidelines for Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Models



- Introduction - Agency Factors and Supervisory Factors
- Reporting Suspected Child Maltreatment
- Investigation/Fact Finding
- Initial Assessment
- In-Home Services
- Out-of-Home Placement

# Guidelines for Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Practice Models (continued)



- Participatory Case Planning
- Case Management
- Permanency Planning
  - Reunification
  - Adoption
  - Guardianship
  - Independent Living
- Post-Permanency Supports

# Examples of Trauma-Informed Practices



- Reporting: explore prior trauma history of child and family
- Investigation: use multidisciplinary teams
- Initial Assessment: assess for possible trauma-related reactions
- In-Home Services: reframe child's behavior "problems" as possible trauma reactions when appropriate
- Out-of-Home Services: inform substitute care providers about child's trauma history and known or possible trauma triggers
- Participatory Case Planning: engage parents and children in choosing appropriate services

# Examples of Trauma-Informed Practices (continued)



- Case Management: develop a list of trauma-informed therapists in the community
- Permanency Planning
  - Reunification: advocate for parent involvement in child's trauma therapy
  - Adoption: educate caregiver about impact of trauma and loss
  - Guardianship: provide skills to parents to manage trauma-related reactions
  - Independent Living: ensure ongoing access to trauma-informed therapy
- Post-Permanency Supports: provide links to trauma-informed community resources for parents and children

# Challenges to Implementation



Moving toward a trauma-informed culture

(Adapted from FalLOT & Harris, 2009)

# Initial Planning



- Administrative commitment and support
- Formation of a trauma workgroup or task force with full representation of each key stakeholder group
- Identification of “trauma champions”
- Programmatic awareness of the scope and timeline of the culture shift

# Challenges



- Availability of resources
- Competing initiatives
- Current culture, trauma responses and impacts not fully understood
- Tension between “clinical” and “case management”

# Kickoff Training Event



- Include as many staff as possible
- Include the following content:
  - Idea of trauma-informed cultures
  - Importance of staff support and care
  - Importance of addressing trauma in child welfare

# Challenges



- Availability of expertise to do the training
- Lack of internal mentors
- Caseload/workload – “I’m already overwhelmed”
- Compassion fatigue

# Short-Term Follow-Up



- Workgroup develops implementation plan for review by staff and stakeholders and consultants
- Train all staff on understanding trauma
- How to do it versus what to do
- Training on staff support and care

# Challenges



- Expertise to do the training
- Competing training initiatives
- Inability to adequately assess fidelity of implementation

# Longer-Term Follow-Up



- Consultants and workgroup evaluate progress
- Planning for sustainability

# Challenges



- Leadership changes
- Short term crises knock you off your stride
- Atrophy and drift
- Walking versus talking

# Questions and Discussion



- Feedback on the Guidelines
- How useful will these Guidelines be in your jurisdiction?
- What are some other challenges to implementation?

# Resources



- [www.cebc4cw.org](http://www.cebc4cw.org) - Online evidence-based practice resource designed for child welfare professionals - with support from California Department of Social Services
- [www.nctsn.org](http://www.nctsn.org) and <http://learn.nctsn.org> - National Child Traumatic Stress Network, includes NCTSN Learning Center for Child and Adolescent Trauma
- [www.ChadwickCenter.org](http://www.ChadwickCenter.org) - Chadwick Center
- [www.musc.edu/tfcbt/](http://www.musc.edu/tfcbt/) - TF-CBT on-line training

# Contact Information



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