Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Interest in the impact of trauma on behavioral health has been steadily increasing since the 1970’s. Models for the treatment of trauma have been developed and tested and a growing number of organizations have explored ways to make their services more responsive to people who have experienced trauma. Recently, multiple federal agencies representing varied sectors, including child welfare, primary health care, criminal justice, education, and labor have recognized the impact of trauma on the children, adults, and families they serve, and have requested assistance from SAMHSA in addressing these issues. This has compelled SAMHSA to revisit trauma-related concepts and their applicability not only to behavioral health but also to other related fields. Additional statistics on women and behavioral health, information about the impact of trauma, and sources for further information can be found in the first Federal Partners Report on Women and Trauma http://nicic.gov/Library/025082.

How a Trauma-Informed Approach Can Make a Difference

In 2011, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identified Trauma and Justice as one of its top priority Strategic Initiatives. This reflected SAMHSA’s leadership in the emerging understanding of the central role of trauma in mental and substance use disorders and of the high rates of trauma and trauma histories among people with behavioral health problems and in the justice system. The goals of the Strategic Initiative are: 1) to create trauma-informed systems to implement prevention and treatment interventions and to reduce the incidence of trauma and its impact on the behavioral health of individuals and communities; and 2) to better address the needs of people with mental health and substance use issues involved with, or at-risk of involvement with, the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

The organizing framework for SAMHSA’s trauma work over the last three years has included: 1) developing a measurement
strategy for trauma and trauma-informed care; 2) enhancing SAMHSA’s cross-systems work; 3) developing a coordinated technical assistance strategy; and 4) developing a shared concept of trauma and trauma-informed approaches.

In May 2012, SAMHSA convened an expert panel to assist in the creation of a working concept of trauma and trauma informed-approaches as well as principles and guidance for implementing trauma-informed approaches. In December 2012, SAMHSA released for public comment a draft document designed to solicit input on the working concept of trauma and a trauma-informed approach.

During the public comment period, SAMHSA received feedback from over two thousand individuals, including over 500 comments and 20,800 votes. The public feedback is currently being used to create a revised version of the concept, principles, and guidance. This public engagement process was a critical piece in creating a more unified framework for the many sectors who serve survivors and their families.

SAMHSA is in the process of further developing its measurement strategy to include trauma measures at the population, facilities, and client levels. To date, fiscal year 2013 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) data collected by the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS) shows approximately 74 percent of women in CMHS-funded grant programs responded affirmatively to having experienced violence or trauma in any setting.

**New Directions and Collaborations**

SAMHSA Co-Chairs the Federal Partner’s Committee on Women, Girls and Trauma.

SAMHSA is partnering with the Administration for Children and Families and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to increase the number of trauma-exposed children in child welfare who receive appropriate and timely services.

SAMHSA participates in the White House working group on HIV/Aids, violence against women and gender-related health disparities.

Coordination across SAMHSA-funded technical assistance centers serves to develop uniform core messages concerning trauma and trauma-informed approaches.

SAMHSA is collaborating with HHS Office on Women’s Health in development of training and curricula on trauma-informed care addressing the needs of women and girls.

SAMHSA is a partner in the Attorney General’s Defending Childhood Initiative, including the Children Exposed to Violence Task Force and Grant program and the National Forum on Youth Violence Prevention 10 Cities Initiative.

**Update Resources**

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SAMHSA Concept Paper on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Approaches
http://www.samhsa.gov/traumaJustice/