Integrating the Needs of Foster Care Youth in Adolescent Pregnancy Prevention Programming: Trauma-Informed Approaches

April 21, 2016
3:00 p.m.–4:30 p.m. ET
By the end of this workshop, participants will be able to do the following:

- Explain the rationale for providing trauma-informed sexual health programming for youth in foster care
- Describe key principles for trauma-informed practice with youth in foster care
- Identify three actions they can implement in their adolescent pregnancy prevention programs
Presenters

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Our Journey...

Definitions

Trauma-/Resilience – Informed Strategies

Effects of Stress & Trauma

Lessons Learned

Lessons from the Field
Definitions
stress

trauma

resilience

adversity
ABUSE
- Physical
- Emotional
- Sexual

NEGLECT
- Physical
- Emotional

HOUSEHOLD DYSFUNCTION
- Mental Illness
- Mother treated violently
- Divorce
- Incarcerated Relative
- Substance Abuse

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WHAT IMPACT DO ACEs HAVE?

As the number of ACEs increases, so does the risk for negative health outcomes.

- 0 ACEs
- 1 ACE
- 2 ACEs
- 3 ACEs
- 4+ ACEs

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Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
### Behavior

- Lack of physical activity
- Smoking
- Alcoholism
- Drug use
- Missed work

### Physical & Mental Health

- Severe obesity
- Diabetes
- Depression
- Suicide attempts
- STDs
- Heart disease
- Cancer
- Stroke
- COPD
- Broken bones

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Positive Stress

Mild/moderate and short-lived stress response necessary for healthy development; brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in stress hormones

Tolerable Stress

More severe stress response but limited in duration which allows for recovery; buffered by supportive relationships

Chronic or Toxic Stress

Extreme, frequent or extended activation of the body’s stress response without the buffering presence of a supportive adult

Source: Harvard Center for the Developing Child
Trauma

Event + Experience + Effects

Acute Trauma
Secondary Trauma
Vicarious Trauma
Insidious and Historical Trauma
Complex Trauma
Intergenerational Trauma

Source: Adolescent Health Working Group Trauma & Resilience Toolkit
Foster Care & Trauma

The great majority of young people in the foster care system have experienced trauma in some form as a result of the following:

- Maltreatment (child abuse and neglect) often with other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)
- Separation from family and community as a result of foster care placement
- Moves and other adverse experiences while in foster care placement

What is resiliency?

Resiliency is the process of successfully adapting and developing positive well-being in the face of chronic stress and adversity.
Effects of Stress and Trauma
Survive Mode: Flight/Fight/Freeze

Frontal lobe (Prefrontal cortex) goes offline
Limbic system / mind and lower brain functions take over

Source: Community Resilience Cookbook
The Window of Tolerance

**Hyperarousal Zone**
Sympathetic “Fight or Flight Response”
(too much arousal)

- Emotional reactivity
- Defensiveness
- Feeling unsafe
- Feeling overwhelm
- Hyper-vigilance
- Impulsivity
- Anger/rage

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**Optimal Arousal Zone**
“Window of Tolerance”

- Feeling safe
- Feel and think simultaneously
- Present moment awareness
- Awareness of boundaries
- Optimal learning/integration

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**Hypoarousal Zone**
Parasympathetic “Immobilization Response”
(too little arousal)

- No energy
- Numbing of emotions
- No feelings
- Passive, shut down
- Reduced physical movement

From Biology to Behavior

- **Behavioral & Self-Regulation**: often identified as acting out, defiant or disruptive behavior, lack of motivation or interest in school
- **Cognition**: memory problems, inability to pay attention, academic difficulties
- **Attachment**: inability to form trusting relationships, over-clinging behavior/dependent
- **Self-Concept**: impacts self-image, self-esteem, and self-value
Trauma/Resilience-Informed Strategies
Two co-facilitators are preparing to do a condom demonstration with a group of young females in a group home. They have placed a penis model and condoms on a table for display. Several students are giggling and making jokes. One student, Jasmine, is quiet, looking down at the floor, and shaking. The facilitators are aware that many of these young women experience complex trauma and have a history of sexual abuse.
Trauma/Resilience-Informed Care/Approaches

Trauma Specific Interventions/Treatments
Understand the effects of stress and trauma

- Train all staff on the effects of stress & trauma – including self care
- Assess current practices and policies
- Shift from “What is wrong?” to “What is happening?”
- Other questions to ask:
  - What is happening here?
  - What is the underlying need?
  - How can we best meet this need?
Ensure cultural humility and responsiveness

- Self-reflection of cultural biases
- Respect culture and diversity within the community
- Recognize power imbalances
- Avoid judgment, shame, and blame
Establish safe and stable environments

- Maintain a warm, calm presence
- Attune to students’ needs
- Physical environment is warm and inviting
- Set and adhere to clear group expectations
- Refer to group expectations frequently
- Be prepared and organized
- Establish seating arrangements
- Plan for potential triggers
Establish safe and stable environments

✓ Identify and respond to potential triggers
✓ Use de-escalation strategies
  • Notice signs of distress
  • Connect with the young person
  • Re-direct behavior with reasonable choices/alternatives
  • After youth is calm, discuss if needed
✓ Integrate calming exercises
✓ Establish calm zones or safe places
✓ Use restorative or positive discipline practices
Connect youth to compassionate and dependable relationships

- Express genuine and consistent concern and support
- Manage stress so that you can be attuned to youth
- Provide trauma trainings for foster parents and other staff who interact with youth
- Know and refer youth to community resources
- Make sure all youth are connected to a caring adult
Foster collaboration and empowerment

- Allow youth voice and choice
- Provide meaningful opportunities for engagement
- Share power and decision-making
- Adopt a strengths-based approach
Promote resilience and recovery

- Develop an attitude of resilience
- Connect young people to appropriate care and supports
- Maintain high expectations
- Enhance life skills (e.g., self-regulation, problem-solving)
Lessons learned
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www.PowerThroughChoices.org
Test the efficacy of the Power Through Choices (PTC) curriculum in reducing the incidence of unprotected sex, STIs and teen pregnancy among youth, ages 13 to 18, living in out-of-home placements.

Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy

Planned Parenthood of Maryland

Kern County Superintendent of Schools (CA)

1,038 youth study participants
Ages 13 to 18
Living in Child Welfare (foster care) or Juvenile Justice group homes
Trauma-informed Practice

- Establish a positive environment
- Provide consistency
- Authentic adults
- Preparation for anticipated and unanticipated events
Case Example

Prepare for the unexpected

Provide permission to opt-out

Arrange for support services in advance

Offer a range of participation options

Accept that you may never understand the “why?”
Any Questions
Closure
Resources

• Organizational Assessments
  – Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit
  – Trauma Sensitive School Checklist

• Toolkits
  – A Trauma-Informed Approach for Adolescent Sexual Health
  – The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success
  – Helping Traumatized Students Learn: Creating and Advocating for Trauma Sensitive Schools
  – Trauma-Informed Child Serving Systems

• Training Models
  – The Sanctuary Model by Dr. Sandra L. Bloom
One important point from today’s Webinar that I want to remember is...
Let’s Hear from You!

- Please complete the following evaluation related to your training needs and interests.

  https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BKML3PF

- If you attended the Webinar with other team members, please share the link and complete the evaluation separately.