

Creating a TI Onboarding Training Policy

Creating a trauma-informed training process for onboarding at an agency involves a systematic and inclusive approach that embeds trauma-informed principles throughout the employee induction experience. Here's a step-by-step breakdown of how to develop, review, write, and sustain this policy:

Step 1: Review Current Onboarding Policies

Before implementing new trauma-informed training, it is essential to understand the existing onboarding structure.

Actions:

- **Audit current onboarding materials:** Examine handbooks, training modules, orientation checklists, and HR policies.
 - **Interview stakeholders:** Speak with HR staff, supervisors, and recently onboarded employees to gather feedback on current onboarding experiences.
 - **Assess alignment with trauma-informed principles:** Compare the existing training with the SAMHSA's six 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
-

Step 2: Identify Gaps in Trauma-Informed Training

Determine where current onboarding processes fall short in addressing trauma-informed care or workplace culture.

Actions:

- **Gap analysis:** Use the information gathered to create a side-by-side comparison of current practices vs. best practices in trauma-informed onboarding.
- **Survey or focus groups:** Engage staff (especially those with lived experience) to identify missing components that would help foster a trauma-informed environment.
- **Compliance check:** Ensure any trauma-informed elements are also aligned with legal and ethical standards (e.g., workplace safety, mental health support).

Step 3: Develop the Trauma-Informed Training Policy

Craft a formal policy that outlines the expectations, structure, and components of trauma-informed onboarding.

Policy Components:

1. **Purpose Statement:** Describe the intent of the trauma-informed onboarding training (e.g., creating a supportive and psychologically safe work environment).
2. **Scope:** Identify which roles or departments are covered.
3. **Core Principles:** Ground the policy in trauma-informed care principles.
4. **Training Objectives:**
 - Educate on recognizing signs of trauma.
 - Emphasize the impact of trauma in the workplace.
 - Promote interpersonal skills rooted in empathy and active listening.
 - Foster culturally responsive interactions.
5. **Implementation Process:**
 - Who delivers the training (HR, internal experts, or external consultants).
 - When and how often training occurs.
 - Whether it's blended (in-person/online) or interactive (role-play, discussions).
6. **Documentation Requirements:** How attendance and completion will be recorded.
7. **Evaluation Plan:** Outline how the effectiveness of training will be measured (e.g., surveys, observation, feedback loops).

RMG Example of a Trauma Informed Onboarding Training Policy

Step 4: Incorporate into Onboarding Process

Make trauma-informed training a standardized part of onboarding.

Actions:

- **Embed into orientation schedules.**
 - **Develop accompanying materials** like guides, videos, and scenarios tailored to the agency's work.
 - **Include organizational leadership:** Have executives model trauma-informed values in introductory sessions.
-

Step 5: Train the Trainers and Staff

Ensure those delivering the onboarding are themselves trained in trauma-informed care.

Actions:

- Provide “train-the-trainer” sessions to HR personnel, supervisors, and team leads.
 - Establish peer mentor or buddy systems for new hires to receive trauma-informed support.
-

Step 6: Sustain the Policy

Ensure the policy is not a one-time implementation but a long-term commitment.

Sustainability Strategies:

- **Continuous Improvement Loop:**
 - Conduct annual reviews of the policy and training modules.
 - Update materials based on new research, staff feedback, or organizational changes.
 - **Leadership Buy-in:** Regularly engage leadership in policy review and public support of trauma-informed values.
 - **Integrate into Performance Evaluations:** Include understanding and application of trauma-informed principles in staff appraisals.
 - **Budget Allocation:** Ensure ongoing funding for training, resources, and external consultation if needed.
 - **Staff Well-being Programs:** Integrate trauma-informed approaches into broader wellness and DEI initiatives.
-

Conclusion

A trauma-informed onboarding training process enhances employee safety, engagement, and retention, particularly in human service organizations. By methodically reviewing current practices, identifying and addressing gaps, developing a structured policy, and planning for long-term sustainability, agencies can build a workplace that acknowledges and supports the impact of trauma.