



Growing a Trauma Responsive Organization

Last month, [Elizabeth Meeker, PsyD](#), Director of CCSI's Training and Practice Transformation team, gave a presentation to the [Council of Agency Executives](#) in Rochester about *Growing a Trauma Responsive Organization*. She talked about the increasing awareness that trauma is pervasive and that the impact of trauma is often deep and life-shaping. Trauma and toxic stress are often at the center of an individual's mental health challenges, substance use, physical health issues and/or criminal justice involvement. This means, whether or not it is fully recognized, organizations are working with survivors of trauma.

It's therefore essential for organizations to become more trauma responsive. When trauma-informed care principles are applied at both the organizational and service provider level, individuals and their families are more likely to engage and participate in services leading to better outcomes, staff are more satisfied, reducing risk of secondary traumatic stress and turnover, and the risk of re-traumatization is minimized. Dr. Meeker explained that understanding the deep impact of trauma changes our interpretation of our own and other's behaviors. Our interpretations impact our tone, body language, and facial expressions and guide our behaviors, words, and interventions.

In her presentation, Dr. Meeker talked about the essential elements of trauma responsive organizations. They acknowledge the prevalence of traumatic events and toxic stress in the lives of the individuals and families they serve, and are therefore mindful of avoiding re-traumatization of individuals and families. They create a flexible framework that includes both universal approaches for all and are sensitive to the unique needs of individuals.

There are different components involved in becoming a trauma-responsive organization. For instance, leadership needs to create the infrastructure and culture that will promote trauma responsiveness, and a multidisciplinary group of “trauma champions” leads the initiative. Assessment is another critical component, as that allows organizations to determine where they are in their journey towards becoming trauma-informed. The [TIC-OSAT \(Trauma-Informed Care – Organizational Self-Assessment Tool\)](#) is a strengths-based organizational self-assessment tool that provides agencies a method to obtain a point in time assessment of their trauma-informed care practices. The tool utilizes the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) 10 Implementation Domains as a framework for guiding survey participants through a sequence of questions related to trauma-informed care within their organization.

[Click here to check out her PowerPoint presentation](#), and contact Dr. Meeker at emeeker@ccsi.org to talk more about how your organization can grow to be more trauma responsive.