A Self-Reflection Tool

Adapted from *Creating Accessible, Culturally Relevant, Domestic Violence and Trauma-Informed Agencies,*
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Focus: Program/Services

1. Think About: Trauma
Are the agency's programs and services trauma-informed?

Some Indicators of Trauma-Informed Programs and Services

- Survivors are **fully informed of rules**, procedures, activities, and schedules; advocates are mindful that people who are frightened or overwhelmed may have a hard time processing even basic information.
- Advocates offer choices at all possible times and support survivors' rights to have control of their own plans (with mindfulness that this may be frightening or unfamiliar for some).
- Advocates demonstrate trustworthiness through an emphasis on transparency, clarity, consistency, and healthy boundaries.
- Advocates work as partners with survivors and tailor approaches to meet the needs of and maximize the self-determination of each individual participant.
- Advocates respond knowledgeably and empathically when survivors disclose experiences of current or previous trauma, immediately **listening and offering support** in a setting of her/his choice (to the extent possible).
- Advocates work to understand the ways in which each survivor's challenges impact her/his ability to engage in the advocacy process.
- Advocates talk with survivors about the range of "normal" trauma reactions and work to **minimize feelings of fear, shame, and stigma**, and to increase self-understanding.
- Advocates help survivors identify **emotional triggers** that may cause them to feel overwhelmed and "out of control."
- Advocates help survivors identify strategies that contribute to feeling comforted and empowered.
- Advocates help survivors develop and use **personal safety plans** to help prevent crises.
- Advocates provide tools and supports for creating physical and emotional safety when appropriate (e.g., personal space and boundaries, affirmation that safety is a right).

Ask Yourself
- In what ways are our program and services already trauma-informed?
- What can we improve?
    - What are the first steps?
    - What resources do we already have that will support our efforts?
    - What resources and supports do we need to support our efforts?

2. Think about: Culture

Does the agency provide services in a way that affirms and is **inclusive of survivors' many identities** (including age, disability, language, sexual orientation, gender, culture, ethnicity, religion, and immigration)?

Some Indicators of Culturally-Informed Programs and Services

- Services are available in the first languages of the majority of people served, and the agency has policies and procedures for providing services for people whose first language is less common in the communities served.
- Staff members do not make assumptions about the culture, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation of individuals being served.
- The agency provides all staff members with training on
    - Diversity and cultural humility (self-awareness around assumptions and beliefs)
    - How staff members' own culture, status, or background can create risk for inadvertent use of power and control
    - The impact of discriminatory and stigmatizing language, practices, and biases, as well as inclusive and non-stigmatizing alternatives
    - How identity, culture, and community can affect a person's experience of domestic violence and other trauma, access to supports and resources, and opportunities for safety
    - How oppression can affect a person's experience of domestic violence and other trauma, access to supports and resources, and opportunities for safety
    (e.g., an LGBTQ survivor may face an additional burden of stigma when disclosing the abuse; a survivor who is undocumented may avoid calling the police because of the threat of deportation)
    - How past experiences with other social service systems or government agencies, or with social or political oppression, may impact how individuals interact with the agencies in the present
    - How communication can take many forms, both verbal and nonverbal
    - How social supports are used by different individuals, cultures, and communities

Ask Yourself

- Does our program provide services in a way that affirms and is inclusive of people's many identities? What are we doing well right now?
- What can we improve?
    - What are the first steps?
    - What resources do we already have that will support our efforts?
    - What resources and supports do we need to support our efforts?