

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ)

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality's (AHRQ) mission is to improve the quality, safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of health care for all Americans through services research, knowledge synthesis, and development of tools for improving services and practice. Women's health is one of AHRQ's priority areas. Violence and trauma affect all areas of women's health. Healthcare providers need to be informed about and skilled in addressing the often unrecognizable health effects of violence and abuse. Research on the efficacy and effectiveness of trauma-informed care as well as tools to assist in training and implementation would contribute to this goal. Additional information about the impact of trauma on the health of women and girls, 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

AHRQ works in partnership with other HHS agencies to develop and disseminate knowledge about trauma and trauma-informed care in primary care settings.

In the late 1990's, AHRQ issued a Request for Applications on violence against women, resulting in a number of tools currently available on the AHRQ website. Materials include an assessment instrument to evaluate domestic violence programs in hospital settings, a manual of evidence-based practices for medical examination and treatment of victims of sexual assault, and a review of programs and tools that improve care for victims of domestic violence. The Innovations Exchange, a fully searchable site hosted by AHRQ, includes a number of programs related to trauma. A user can find evidence-based innovations and quality tools, view new innovations and tools published biweekly, and learn from experts through events and articles.

<http://innovations.ahrq.gov>



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Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

In April 2013, AHRQ supported a conference grant to Yale University. The primary goal of the conference was to articulate and disseminate empirically-informed knowledge, attitudes, and skills that mental health practitioners working with trauma survivors should have from a “competency” perspective. Participants were experts in the field of trauma. They defined interdisciplinary competencies that apply across psychology, social work and psychiatry, and that are equally applicable to adults and children. Further, the participants defined the fewest number of essential competencies that focus on commonalities in the field rather than differences.

The competencies developed at this conference should serve as useful tools for training programs and for individual mental health providers. They will eventually be published and disseminated in multiple formats including brochures, newsletters, and presentations. The intent is for the competencies to form the basis for a trauma psychology guideline, specialty, or proficiency within the American Psychological Association.

New Directions and Collaborations

AHRQ supports the US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF), an independent panel of non-Federal experts in prevention and evidence-based medicine. Members include primary care providers such as internists, pediatricians, family physicians, gynecologists/obstetricians, nurses, and health behavior specialists. The USPSTF conducts scientific evidence reviews of a broad range of clinical preventive health care services (such as screening, counseling, and preventive medications) and develops recommendations for primary care clinicians and health systems. Currently, there are two recommendations related to trauma:

Screening for Intimate Partner Violence and Abuse of Elderly and Vulnerable Adults.

<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/uspstf12/ipvelder/ipvelderfinalrs.htm>.

Primary Care Interventions to Prevent Child Maltreatment: U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendation Statement.

<http://www.uspreventiveservicestaskforce.org/recommendations.htm>

Additional Resources

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<http://www.ahrq.gov/research/womenix.htm>

Academy on Violence and Abuse

<http://www.avahealth.org/>