

Office on Violence Against Women (OVW)

IMPACT OF TRAUMA

The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) provides federal leadership in developing the nation's capacity to reduce violence against women and to administer justice for and strengthen services to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Since 1995, OVW has distributed more than \$5 billion to provide services to victims, hold offenders accountable, ensure justice for survivors, and prevent violence. Domestic violence and sexual assault are often associated with depression, suicide, and other mental health consequences; PTSD rates after sexual assault can be as high as 94 percent. For some survivors, these issues may be managed with increased safety and support. Others may benefit from additional resources and treatment. In recent years, a significant effort has formed across the country to encourage domestic and sexual violence programs to ensure that their services are trauma-informed. Additional statistics on women and violence 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

Trauma-informed services are sensitive to the pervasiveness of trauma and its impact on survivors, including how trauma affects a survivor's ability to cope, to access services, and to feel safe both physically and emotionally. Trauma-informed services are strength-based and non-pathologizing. They take steps to identify potential trauma triggers, reduce re-traumatization, and attend to the quality of interactions between staff and survivors receiving services. Trauma-informed organizations provide survivors and staff with an environment and structure that is inclusive, welcoming, de-stigmatizing, and not re-traumatizing. A critical component of trauma-informed service delivery is attending to the emotional needs of direct service staff, including recognizing vicarious trauma, and addressing self-care in substantive ways.

Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

OVW's Children Exposed to Violence program provides training to programs on Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy for children. This form of therapy is highly successful in improving mental health outcomes for children with a history of experiencing trauma, such as witnessing



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domestic violence. Parents also receive education and training because they play a critical role in their child's therapy.

As we continue our work to help survivors heal it is important to understand the underlying mechanism of trauma. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center used OVW funding to develop an innovative course entitled "The Brain, Body, and Trauma." This course gives victim service providers: 1) an overview of the neurobiological and psychological implications of sexually violent trauma; and 2) the information and skills necessary to provide trauma-informed services.

After a sexual assault, survivors often engage the criminal justice system when seeking safety and support. It is crucial that law enforcement and other members of the criminal justice community are trained to use trauma-informed approaches with survivors. The International Association of Chiefs of Police, an OVW grantee, developed the Trauma Informed Sexual Assault Investigation curriculum, which will be implemented in selected law enforcement agencies nationwide. The curriculum focuses on helping officers to develop the skills they need to effectively respond to and investigate sexual assault cases. Officers will learn about the effects of trauma on sexual assault victims, as well as enhancing an officers' ability to identify and document perpetrator behaviors.

New Directions and Collaborations

OVW is working with the Rose Brooks Center in Kansas City to integrate trauma-informed practices into services for domestic violence survivors and their children. Using "The Three C's" - a universal trauma-informed approach - the Rose Brooks Center is seeking to ensure all practices and environments are trauma-informed, including a building expansion that provides a quiet room for shelter residents, an improved security system, and a pet shelter.

Integrating trauma-informed philosophies throughout the work of community and local government agencies improves the quality of services and results in improved health outcomes. An OVW Disability grantee in Wisconsin is employing multi-faceted strategies to infuse trauma-informed thinking and practices throughout their work. This led to the establishment of the Leadership Group of Learning and Infusion Initiative that cultivates leadership at the intersection of disabilities and anti-violence efforts. The project focuses on personal leadership development within a statewide collaboration of partner organizations and pilot communities to foster long-term sustainability of trauma-informed leadership development.

Additional Resources

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<http://www.ovw.usdoj.gov/>
www.VAWnet.org
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