The Work of the Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma

The Roundtables and Webinar Series

The Federal Partners Committee has used several strategies to expand public and agency awareness about trauma and trauma-informed approaches. On April 29, 2010, the Committee hosted its first Roundtable on Women and Trauma, which brought together more than 80 representatives from the Federal, State, academic, survivor, and practice arenas to examine the impact of trauma on the work of those who attended. Roundtable I highlighted the prevalence of violence, abuse and trauma experienced by women and girls across all segments of society and demonstrated the scope and gendered nature of women's and girls’ experiences of trauma and violence. The Roundtable highlighted the public health consequences of violence and trauma across a wide range of issues including childhood sexual abuse, military sexual trauma, bullying, teen dating violence, domestic and intimate partner violence, trauma in the workplace, witnessing of violence in the household, and trauma experienced within health and social service systems themselves. The Roundtable also generated a call to action.

The proceedings of the Roundtable were distributed in the 2011 Report of the Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma (available at: http://nicic.gov/Library/025082). The report summarizes research data documenting the level of violence against women and girls in our society and examining the consequences, provides background information on the Federal Partners Committee, identifies key issues facing participating agencies, and summarizes the first Roundtable meeting. The report also highlights action items identified by the Committee.

On December 6-7, 2011, a second Roundtable was held. More than 230 people attended. Using a public health framework, Roundtable II focused on promising practices and high-priority interagency issues. Keynote and plenary presentations from noted leaders in the field described new and promising approaches addressing the impact of trauma on women and girls, and workshops provided an opportunity for participant engagement. Topics included the implementation of trauma-informed care with community-based front-line providers; military and veteran women; integration of the first-person experience and voices of women exposed to trauma; new approaches to trauma prevention and screening assessment; cross-cultural settings, diversity issues, and other underserved populations; and the workplace. Agendas from both Roundtables can be found in the Appendix.
What are the implications of the legacy of cultural oppression? If people have lived with racial epithets, those will be the trauma triggers for them.

Firoza Chic Daby-Chinoy, Director, Asian and Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Institute Roundtable II

In 2013-2014, the Committee will initiate a webinar series that will take the message to an even wider audience, including those who cannot travel to a DC-based Roundtable. The webinar series will be designed to deepen participant understanding of the complex impacts of trauma, particularly ways in which trauma manifests across multiple domains; to showcase promising and evidence-based practices; to increase participants’ ability to assess current practice and to implement change; and to disseminate key resources and tools. All webinars will include speakers from different service systems and will be archived for future use.

After polling Committee members, the following emerged as high-priority webinar topics: the intersection of domestic violence, sexual violence, and trauma; workplace violence and trauma; the intersection of substance abuse, mental health, and trauma; culturally relevant trauma-informed programming; trauma-Informed healthcare; and veterans and trauma. The first webinar is planned for the fall of 2013.

The Coordinating Committees

Seven coordinating committees provide a structured platform for ongoing collaboration on topics directly affecting multiple agencies. The coordinating committees were instrumental in planning Roundtable II and also work on a variety of ongoing projects of mutual concern. While topics and membership vary over time, current coordinating committees include:

**Veteran and Military Women and Trauma-Informed Approaches.** Participants include DOD (DCOE, FAP, SAPRO, and OASD-HA), VA, HHS (OWH, SAMHSA), HUD (SNAPS), ONDCP, and DOL. Veterans often face issues getting jobs, finding housing, or dealing with family problems, all of which can be affected by trauma. Members of this committee work together to find solutions though sharing research and information, joint program and policy development, training, and other initiatives.

**Workplace and Trauma-Informed Approaches.** Participants include DOL (ODEP, OSHA, and WB) and HHS (SAMHSA, HRSA, OWH). Recognizing that trauma can affect both individual workers and organizational culture, this committee is focusing on products and resources that will be helpful to employers and employees. Best practices for a trauma-informed workplace include trauma training for all staff, support for organizational change, trauma-informed human
resource and supervisory practices, policies on domestic violence and the workplace, linguistic and cultural accessibility, and addressing sources of conflict within the workplace. The committee is currently working on a short policy memo for employers on trauma-informed workplaces and workforce development systems.

**Integration of First Person Experience and Voice.** Participants include HHS (SAMHSA), DOL (ODEP) and DOJ (OVC). The mission of this committee is: to identify and disseminate federal/state/local and nonprofit initiatives, research literature, training, technical assistance, and other resources that address peer-support models and integration of survivor experience and voice in workforce development, policy, planning, programming, and evaluation. Work to date has included assisting other coordinating committees to identify and integrate survivor voice and disseminating key resources, including SAMHSA’s *Engaging Women in Trauma-Informed Peer Support: A Guidebook*.

**New Approaches to Trauma Screening and Assessment.** Participants include HHS (SAMHSA, OWH, ACF), and DOJ (NIC, OJJDP). This committee is working towards accomplishing goals generated at Roundtable II, including the development of a set of guidelines for the field about trauma screening and assessment. Guidelines will address issues such as: where should screening and assessment be done and by whom; what should happen afterwards; what tools currently exist; etc. A set of “Frequently Asked Questions about Trauma Screening and Assessment” is currently under development.

**Implementation of Trauma-Informed Care with Community-based Providers.** Participants include HHS (ACYF, OWH) and HUD. This committee is moving beyond the health and human service systems to support the application of trauma-informed approaches by front-line providers, with a particular emphasis on resilience. A curriculum on trauma and women’s health issues, developed by HHS (OWH and SAMHSA) and currently being pilot tested, is an outgrowth of this committee.

**Cross-Cultural Settings and Diversity Issues.** Participants include HHS (ACF), Peace Corps, and DOL (ODEP). The domain of this committee spans an extremely broad range of different groups and circumstances. This diversity brought real strength to the discussion at the second roundtable, where underserved groups that rarely meet together had a chance to learn from each other. The committee is focusing on education and justice issues which form an important part of trauma-informed approaches.
**Outreach/Promotion.** Participants include HHS (SAMHSA, OWH) and DOJ (NIC). This committee was formed in response to Roundtable II, as members became aware of the increasing demand in the field for information about trauma-informed approaches. The committee has focused on ways to move beyond the federal partners to include federal legislators and state, regional, territorial and community partners; to increase the visibility of the issue through media exposure; and to partner with community-based and faith-based organizations and individuals with the lived experience of trauma.

**Conclusion**

The Federal Partners Committee on Women and Trauma has played a pivotal role in highlighting the scope of the problem of violence against women and girls. More importantly, it has championed emerging knowledge, innovations, strategies, practices and collaborations to address these problems through trauma-informed approaches, regardless of setting, system, sector, or community. Through its development of a common understanding of the problem, the Committee has opened new doors. This work has far-reaching impact, as grant programs stimulate innovation in local communities, new tools are made available for a variety of applications, and new partnerships devise creative solutions to persistent problems.

The Committee’s success in bringing together, prevention, promotion, assessment and treatment efforts is stimulating similar work at the state and local levels. Statewide interagency trauma task forces and steering committees have sprung up in many states. Other efforts have begun at the county and municipal levels. Each effort is organized differently, but all bring new players to the table, develop local leadership and broad-based support for trauma-informed approaches, and create synergy by working across silos. The number of interagency efforts that have emerged in states and localities is testimony to the power of working across agencies.

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One thing was immediately self-evident: no organization would ever be “done” implementing trauma-informed care. Once begun, it would be a continuous process requiring ongoing reflection on practices and policies, training for new staff and boosters for long-time staff, and an attentive eye on the organization’s culture to prevent returning to prior practices.

**Valorie Carson**, Johnson County (Kansas) Interagency Trauma-Informed Care Task Force