Trauma Informed Care: An Overview
Who is SEDNET?

*The Multiagency Network for Students with Emotional/Behavioral Disabilities*

- Created by the Florida Legislature in 1984
- A statewide discretionary project funded by the Department of Education.
- Works with other agencies to create and facilitate a network of stakeholders committed to providing quality care to children with or at risk of E/BD
- 19 regions across the state
- [www.sednetfl.info](http://www.sednetfl.info)
Essential Question

How can knowledge of trauma improve student outcomes?
Lisa’s 911 Call

https://youtu.be/G_ht2vAYPoc
Under the Surface

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZ-pU7ozt3g
When these kids go to school they…

- Feel safe
- Feel secure
- Feel supported
- Have the ability to “regulate their emotions”
- Experience academic success
- Have positive self-esteem
- Goal oriented
- Have hopes and dreams
When these kids go to school they...

- Feel insecure
- Feel uncertain
- Feel nervous
- Feel scared
- Can’t “regulate their emotions”
- Have poor self-concept
- Struggle in school
- Feel helpless
- Feel hopeless
"Students who are loved at home, come to school to learn, and students who aren't, come to school to be loved.

~Nicholas A. Ferroni
“One out of every four children attending school has been exposed to a traumatic event that can affect learning and/or behavior.”

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
School Enrollment / DCF Data

- **32,078** students are enrolled in Okaloosa County Schools
- **8,020** students have experienced a traumatic event
- **2,598** students are at risk of developing serious mental health issues before the age of 18
- **321** homeless children in our schools
- **187** Foster Children in our schools

6/2018 Okaloosa County School District MIS Reports
What is Trauma?

Any stressful event that is prolonged, overwhelming, and unpredictable.

- Accidents
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse
- Neglect
- Foster Care
- Adoption
- Loss

- Natural Disasters
- Frequent moves
- Bullying
- Loss of a caregiver
- Domestic violence
- Witnessing violence
Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-informed care is a/n (compassionate) approach to engaging people with histories of trauma, that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives.
What Makes an Event Traumatic?

- Sudden, unexpected, and extreme
- Usually involves physical harm or perceived life threat
- People experience these events as out of their control
- Certain stages of life makes people vulnerable to the effects of trauma
  - Childhood
  - Teens
  - Early twenties.

~(Tedeschi, 2011)
https://www.ted.com/talks/nadine_burke_harris_how_childhood_trauma_affects_health_across_a_lifetime?language=en#t-107447
ACE score of 4 or more are...

• 2 x more likely to be diagnosed with cancer
• 4 x more likely to suffer from emphysema
• 6 x more likely to have had sex before the age of 15
• 7 x more likely to be alcoholics
• 32 x more likely to have learning/behavior problems
• More likely to have a shortened life expectancy by up to 20 years
FIGHT or Flight

Uncertainty, Paralysis, Powerlessness, Avoidance
Flight or Fight: A Review

• Nerve cells fire/chemicals are released
• Respiratory rate increases/heart beats faster
• Blood rushes to their muscles & limbs
• Pupils dilate and sight sharpens
• Their awareness intensifies
• Their impulses quicken
• Their perception of pain diminishes
Flight or Fight: A Review

• They scan and search their environment looking for the **enemy**.
• Their rational mind shuts down, they are in "**attack**" mode.
• They overreact.
• Their **fear** is exaggerated.
• Their **thinking** is distorted.
• They narrow their focus to those things that can **harm** them.
• **Fear** becomes the lens through which they see the world.
• They do **everything** they can to **survive**.
Interventions during “Melt Downs”

- Have the child drink a bottle of water to help metabolize hormones of crisis
- Have the child look up (move eyes up) to disconnect brain from negative emotions
- Allow time for boys to process before having a discussion about incident
- Sit next to boys for the discussion rather than across from them

Ruby Payne – Emotional Poverty
What Does Trauma Look Like?

3-year old children

Normal

Extreme Neglect

These images illustrate the negative impact of neglect on the developing brain. In the CT scan on the left is an image from a healthy 3-year-old with an average head size. The image on the right is from a 3-year-old suffering from severe sensory-deprivation neglect. This child's brain is significantly smaller than average and has abnormal development of cortex."

by Bruce D. Perry, M.D., Ph.D.
Trauma affects the brain!!!!!!!
It can lead to ....

- Sleeping difficulties
- Behavior issues (impulsivity, aggressiveness, withdrawal)
- Physical symptoms /medical issues
- Sensory sensitivity
- Reckless and risk-taking behavior
- Disengagement from school
- Poor social interactions
- Other mental health issues
- Learning problems
How does Trauma Affect Learning?

- Speech and language difficulties
- Difficulty concentrating
- Lower academic achievement
- Lower test scores
- More likely to drop out of school

- Poor relationships with peers and teachers
- More likely to repeat a grade
- More likely to be placed in special education classes
- Suspended and expelled more often
Triggers

- Reminders of past traumatic experiences that automatically cause the body to react as if the traumatic event is happening again in that moment.

- **What might be a trigger for a traumatized youth?**
  - Loud noises
  - Physical touch
  - Changes in routine
  - Emergency Personnel and vehicles
  - Confusing or chaotic environment
  - Hand or body gestures
  - Authority figures
How Can I Help? What Should I Do?

Building Trauma Informed Care Systems requires a Paradigm Shift from the Question:

“What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”

A child’s behavior may be indicative of:

• Coping Mechanisms
• Survival Techniques
• Resiliency

Ask yourself:

• Is what I am doing respectful and trauma-informed?
• Am I treating others the way I want to be treated?
A Dilemma: *How do we know a child is suffering from a traumatic event?*

- Symptoms of trauma can look a lot like ADHD, ODD, Conduct Disorder, etc.

- The strategies used to support children suffering from trauma can benefit all students.
Six Teaching Principles “Trauma Informed”

- Always Empower; Never Disempower
- Provide Unconditional Positive Regard
- Maintain High Expectations
- Check Assumptions, Observe and Question
- Be a Relationship Coach
- Guided Opportunities for Helpful Participation

Wolpow, Johnson, Hertel, Kincaid (2011)
Important Things We Can Do

• Make Students feel safe and secure
• Create Positive Classroom/School Environments
• Teach Students about the impact of stress
• Create relationships/connections
• Teach Self-Regulation, Self Expression and Self Advocacy skills
• Support the development of constructive coping and interpersonal skills
• Ensure that shaming and humiliation do not occur
• Build resilience in children
Resilience

• The ability to recover from or adjust to misfortune or change (Miriam Webster)

• How do we build it?
  • a secure bond with an adult
  • relationships with positive role models
  • opportunities to learn skills
  • opportunities to be a part of meaningful activities
Practical Suggestions

- Maintain usual routines; return to ‘normalcy’ to send message of trust and safety
- Increase the level of support and encouragement by designating an adult who can provide support
- 10:1 - ratio of positive to negative statements
- Behavior plans based on rewards systems and explicit instruction, not punishment
- Set clear, firm limits for inappropriate behavior and logical consequences
More Suggestions

- Be sensitive to potential triggers in environment that may cause a reaction
- Warn children if you will be doing something out of the ordinary (i.e. turning off lights or making a loud noise)
- Create stable structure as much as possible
- Use of specific praise
  “You did a great job paying attention in class today.” vs “Good job today.”

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators - October 2008)
Every Opportunity
The kids who need the most love will ask for it in the most unloving ways.