

TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE

A Guide for Patients and Caregivers to Advocate for Trauma-Informed Care in all Aspects of Healthcare



WHAT IS A “TRAUMA”?

Some examples may include:

- *being physically harmed*
- *touched in a way that was very uncomfortable*
- *witnessing others being harmed*
- *being in a car crash*
- *experiencing a natural disaster*
- *scary and/or life-changing new medical diagnosis/es*
- *medical treatments such as painful or frightening procedures*
- *experiencing racism or bias*

There are many other experiences that can also be traumas.

WHAT IS POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS?

After a trauma, you / your child may experience ongoing distress related to the trauma.

Signs or symptoms of posttraumatic stress may include:

- *re-experiencing* (e.g., bad dreams about the event, thinking about it when they don't want to)
- *avoidance* (e.g., not going to places or being around people that remind them of the trauma)
- *having gloomy thoughts or feelings* (e.g., feeling isolated, sad/down, not being interested in fun activities)
- *feeling more touchy or on edge* (e.g., mad/cranky, on “high alert”, trouble sleeping or concentrating)

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU NEED MORE SUPPORT?

Ask your medical team for help to find a mental health professional who can provide evidenced-based treatments to address trauma and posttraumatic stress.

There are a number of treatments that have been shown to increase healthy coping and feelings of safety in youth with trauma. In addition to asking your / your child's medical team for a referral, you may be able to find therapists with experience in trauma via your insurance company or online.

HOW MIGHT TRAUMA IMPACT EXPERIENCES WITH DOCTORS OR HOSPITALS?

People who experience trauma and posttraumatic stress react in different ways, that may include:

- *avoiding* [because trauma reminders can be stressful]
 - going to the doctor or hospital
 - calling their doctor with questions
 - taking medications or doing their medical treatments
- *going more often* to the doctor, emergency room, or hospital with worries about physical symptoms
- *having a hard time trusting* healthcare providers and following their advice

Without getting help with these symptoms, this can lead to poorer mental and physical health long-term.



WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE ?

Many professional healthcare groups have encouraged medical teams to provide medical care using a trauma-informed framework.

This means that medical team members may:

- *consider* what you and your child and/or family has been through outside of medical care (for example, your family experienced a trauma in the past)
- *look for signs* that more support is needed
- *determine* if you and/or your child are experiencing trauma reactions
- *tailor* medical care to consider any present trauma reactions

Trauma-Informed Care can help you and your child/family feel more comfortable and less stressed and stay healthier.

WHAT MIGHT TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE LOOK LIKE?

Your medical team can use Trauma-Informed Care in every part of your care to increase comfort and trust, including:

- *primary care*
- *bloodwork*
- *outpatient procedures/surgery*
- *inpatient hospital stays, and more*

Your medical team may ask questions about how to communicate with you and if there are strategies or tips they can use to increase comfort and reduce distress.

They may also share ideas that they have about reducing distress.

Sometimes medical teams will offer families referrals to mental health providers for additional support.

WHAT CAN YOU DO IF YOU NEED MORE SUPPORT?



Websites that may be helpful:

WWW.PSYCHOLOGYTODAY.COM/US/THERAPY-TYPES/TRAUMA-FOCUSED-COGNITIVE-BEHAVIOR-THERAPY

WWW.NCTSN.ORG

INJURY.RESEARCH.CHOP.EDU/EDUCATIONAL-RESOURCES/PEDIATRIC-TRAUMATIC-STRESS

WWW.COPINGSPACE.ORG

WWW.HEALTHCARETOOLBOX.ORG



HOW CAN YOU ASK FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE?

It is helpful for medical teams to know that you or your child have a trauma history and / or are experiencing distress.

It is ok if you are not comfortable sharing the details of what happened to you or your child with your medical team*.

You can still advocate for and receive Trauma-Informed Care even if you do not share details of your trauma history.

Share ideas of things that will make you feel more comfortable with your medical team. Some *examples* may include:

- *Expressing preference* for the gender of provider(s) involved in your care (when possible) and / or having a support person present during an exam
- *Limiting* the number of medical professionals in the room during exams to only those necessary
- *Providing* you with clear information on what to expect during an exam or procedure
- *Waking you up* at night prior to collecting vitals or doing exams
- *Following a specific plan* for procedures that you work with the team to create (for example, a plan for needle sticks)

You can also share the provider guide (that goes with this guide) with your medical team and highlight ideas that work for you and your child

*If your or your child's trauma includes any past or safety current concerns for yourself or others, we encourage you to share this with your / your child's medical team so that they can work with you on keeping your family safe.

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