

Trauma Informed Approaches With Justice Involved Individuals

Becky Haas, Presenter

(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024

BH
Becky Haas
AUTHOR | SPEAKER | TRAINER

Learning Objectives

- Why justice professionals need to understand trauma
- Prevalence of trauma experienced by those in the justice system
- How to identify trauma - trauma behaviors
- Examples of trauma informed justice programs
- Self care as a priority for justice professionals

Why Learn About Trauma?

- Justice professionals need training about how being trauma-informed can improve criminal justice system responses
- It is NOT a program about the treatment of trauma
- Training should be specific to using a justice lens
- In the justice system, your role is not one of a counselor, however you are present in traumatic circumstances where “YOU” become the intervention
- Understanding trauma behaviors will assist you in certain criminal investigations or in referrals to additional resources



What is Trauma

- Individual trauma results from an event, a series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual that are physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that have lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
- ~ *Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration*



Trauma Informed Justice System

- Using a trauma informed approach in the justice system is not about having to know the story of trauma. It's about building skills to deal with the lingering effects of the trauma.
- Justice professionals should realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery.
- By understanding the prevalence of trauma in the lives of those in the justice system, professionals should use a universal precaution approach.

Adults in the Justice System

Among Adults:

98% of female offenders have experienced trauma, often interpersonal trauma and domestic violence

75% of adults in substance abuse treatment report histories of trauma

93% of homeless mothers have a lifetime history of trauma

70% of adults in the U.S. have experienced some type of traumatic event at least once in their lives.

In public behavioral health, over 90% of clients have experienced trauma.

<https://nicic.gov/association-between-aces-and-criminal-justice-involvement-part-1>, National Institute of Corrections, *"The Association between ACEs and Criminal Justice Involvement"*

Prevalence of Trauma in Children and Youth

- 70% of children and youth in foster care have experienced at least two types of trauma
- 85% of children in Head Start have experienced trauma
- 72% of youth who runaway and are homeless report being exposed to trauma
- 90% of youth involved in juvenile justice have been exposed to at least one potentially traumatic event
- 68% of youth will be exposed to violence before graduating high school



ACEs Science

- Law enforcement professionals have long used science to enhance public safety.
- Finger printing, DNA samples, rape kits, blood alcohol tests and more.
- ACEs IS science. Once trained, law enforcement personnel can effectively use this science to improve public safety as well



**“The research could not be clearer.
Exposure to toxic stress and traumatic
events is the root cause of many of the
issues we deal with in law enforcement.
The good news is this: What is predictable
is preventable.”**

– Chief Chris Leusner

Middle Township, NJ Police Department

Actions4ACEs.com



Justice Professionals Need to Know About ACEs

*"It's not about going soft on crime
but it's becoming smart on crime."*

Judge Shelia Calloway
Nashville/Davidson County
Juvenile Court Judge



Rob Reed, Executive Deputy Attorney
General for Special Initiatives
Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General

“Trauma needs to be viewed as a public
health matter if society is going to
benefit individuals in a lasting and
positive way.”



What Traumatic Stress Reactions May Look Like for Those Justice Involved

- **Physical**

- Shaking
- Increased heart rate
- Physical complaints (headaches, body aches)
- Hives
- Diarrhea
- Inactivity or slow physical movement
- Physically stuck, slow/nonresponsive (or immobilized)
- Nausea and vomiting

- **Emotional**

- Inconsistent emotions that are “all over the map”
- Wailing, sobbing
- Volatile, angry
- Verbally attacking others
- Absence of feelings
- Blank stare
- Inappropriate emotions
- Sudden fits of laughter
- Giggling

Cognitive

- Confused - Difficulty making decisions
- Loses of train of thought – has incoherent thoughts
- Talks about things that seem random or not connected to what is being asked
- Gets “stuck”
- Preoccupied with elements of the event
- Thoughts are dominated by fixed focus on particular elements of the event
- Makes pressured demands for more information, regardless of attempts at redirection
- Repeats concerns or questions in spite of information that has been made available or the fact that more information is not available
- Memory loss or inconsistent memory about events
- Poor sense of time
- Inability to recall place and identifying information regarding suspects and others involved in the event

Behavioral

- Agitated
- Pacing
- Moving hands and arms in a nervous fashion
- Foot tapping
- Finger drumming
- Swiveling head
- Darting eyes
- Immobilized
- Inactivity or slow movement
- Withdrawn/isolated
- Seeming stunned and slow to respond to external cues and stimuli such as questions, attempts to make eye contact, etc.
- Irritable - Angry
- Verbal outbursts/yelling
- Fatigued
- Young children may be
- Clingy
- Fussy
- Running around

(International Association of Chiefs of Police and Yale Child Study Center. 2017. Enhancing Police Responses to Children Exposed to Violence: A Toolkit for Law Enforcement.)

Trauma Behaviors as Corroborating Evidence

- Look for signs of:
 - Social isolation
 - Avoidance of location(s)
 - Trauma behaviors can be corroborators of the crime
- Change in:
 - School or work performance
 - Weight (gain or loss)
 - Personal relationships
 - Behavior with the suspect
 - Alcohol or drug use

Why Train Members of Law Enforcement?

- The Nature of Police Work:
 - Even though police are referred to as law enforcement officers, meaning the enforcement of criminal law, (i.e. investigating crime and apprehending criminals) this is only **one** of several functions police perform.
 - Police do fight crime, but are mainly called upon to be social workers, conflict mediators, traffic directors, mental health counselors, detailed report writers, neighborhood patrollers, and low-level law enforcers, sometimes all in the span of a single shift.
 - A New York Times Article in June of 2020, call data of 10 police agencies, including precincts with relatively high violent crime rates was reviewed. Officers responding to violent crime made up only around 1% of calls for service.



Officer Training

- A 2016 national study of the training of 135,000 recruits across 664 local police academies found, on average, officers each received 168 hours of training in firearm skills, self-defense, and use of force out of 840 total hours.
- Another 42 hours were spent on criminal investigations, 38 on operating an emergency vehicle, 86 on legal education aimed primarily at force amendment law, and hundreds more on basic operations and self-improvement.
- Topics like domestic violence only accounted for (13 hours), mental illness (10 hours), and mediation and conflict management (9 hours).
- Topics like homelessness and substance abuse, were so rare they didn't make the data set.

[We train police to be warriors — and then send them out to be social workers; VOX, July 31, 2020](#)

Trauma Informed Policing



(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024

- Safety and Security
- Validation and Ventilation
 - According to the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#), some police officers have a false but widely held view of sexual assault survivors perceiving that a high number of sexual assault cases are false reports.
 - Studies on sexual assault crime data suggests it is only 2-8% of reports filed are actually false.
- Preparation and Prediction

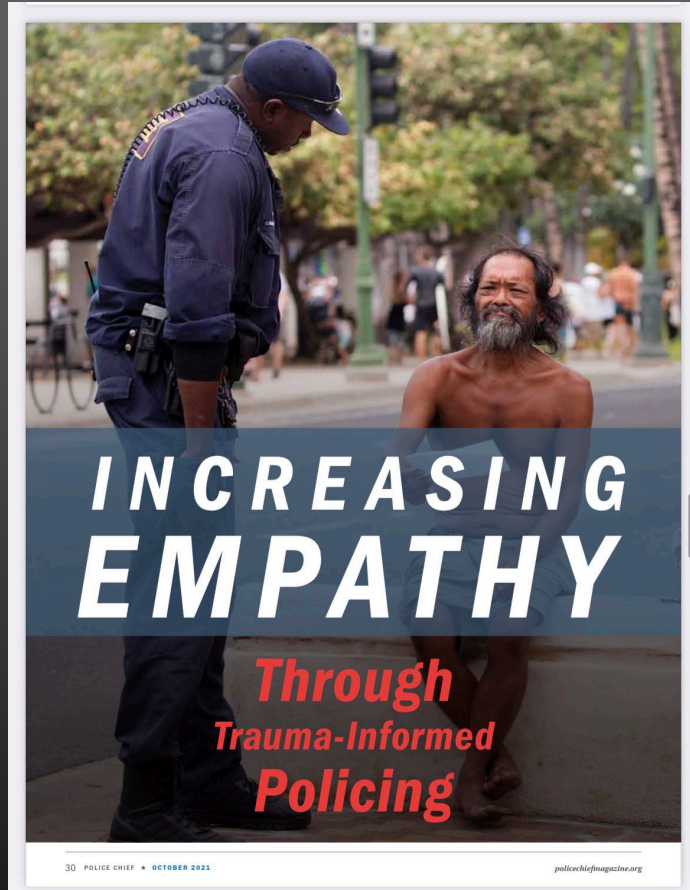
Examples of Trauma-Informed Justice Programs

- Domestic violence calls with children on scene and officers make referrals to child mental health services for follow up.
- Social worker or Mental Health Professional Ride Along – allows trained professionals to evaluate individuals for best response
- Tele-Behavioral Health Access – officers have access to provide tele-behavioral health evaluation on scene
- Mental Health Professional or Social Worker as part of police department staff



- Juvenile Civil Citation - holds the youth accountable for delinquent behavior, involves the parents in sanctioning the youth, and helps prevent the youth's further involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- Cop Care Bags – patrol cars have items to help calm children on scene
- Bigs in Blue/Lunch Buddies – officer mentoring programs
- Softening environments in police interview rooms
- CIT and Trauma Informed Policing Training for officers

Trauma Informed Policing Training



Handle With Care



- West Virginia Center for Children's Justice
- Handle with Care provides school leadership with a “heads up” when a child has been identified at the scene of a traumatic event involving law enforcement

Cambridge Police Department

Revamped one of their interview rooms into a 'soft,' more comfortable interview space for survivors being interviewed about their assaults



(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024

Creating Connection Cumberland County Sheriff's Department



(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024

Patrol Car Wraps



The Martinsburg Initiative

- TMI is an innovative and police-school-community partnership focused on creating a trauma informed community working to build resilience in children, so they are less likely to succumb to scientific research predictions.
- Handle With Care
- Berkeley County Schools
- Martinsburg Police Department
- Shepherd University
- Community organizations
- The Boys & Girls Club of the Eastern Panhandle
- The Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA).





Texas Department of Juvenile Services Williamson County TX

Trauma Informed – Williamson County Juvenile Court Practices

- Youth escorted into court by Youth Engagement Specialists (relationship) – no handcuffs/restraints unless a serious safety issue
- Availability of sensory items in the courtroom (fidgets, etc.)
- Therapy dogs in the courtroom and in the holding area for youth awaiting court
- Judge expectation of limited adversarial arguments that could retraumatize youth/family
- Judge makes eye contact, checks-in, validates feelings, and treats all in court with dignity and respect
- Judge, attorneys, prosecutor, juvenile services all trained in trauma-informed care with an intentional focus on not re-traumatizing in the court room

Outcomes

Residential Services:

6 – month follow-up
comparison after TBRI®
implementation CORE
Residential (trauma-
informed) vs. Academy
(military structure)

83% decrease in youth
grievances filed

93% decrease in suicide
watches

31% decrease in physical
restraints

45% increase in completion
of program

Judge Theresa Dellick, Mahoning County Ohio Juvenile Court Judge



North Carolina ACEs Informed Courts

- Chief Justice Newby Announced Task Force on ACEs-Informed Courts – May 2021
- To understand the impact of ACEs on children and to develop strategies for addressing adverse childhood experiences within our court system.





- The Task Force has:
- Provided judges and court administrators with practical education on the effects of ACEs;
- Worked to equip juvenile court officials to recognize young offenders and victims impacted by ACEs;
- Identified existing programs and design new programs that intervene in the lives of young ACEs offenders and victims affected by ACEs to put them on a path away from the courthouse and into a successful adult life; and
- Provide a platform from which court officials can offer feedback to educators regarding their experiences, with the hope of creating further avenues for research on this important topic.

Adult & Juvenile Courts

Florida 6th Circuit Court Judge Lynn Tepper (retired) on ACEs





(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024



What Hurts and What Helps

What Hurts	What Helps
Interactions that are humiliating, harsh, impersonal, disrespectful, critical, demanding and judgmental.	Show Respect – interactions that express respect, kindness, patience, reassurance, and acceptance.

Environment

What Hurts	What Helps
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Congested, noisy waiting areas• Congested, noisy courtrooms• Confusing signage• Not feeling safe and secure• Long periods of wait time before appearing before the judge• Vast physical distance between the judge and the parties• An elevated bench between the judge and the parties• Intimidating behavior by the bailiffs• Recalling traumatic events, memories, and feelings in open court	<p>Reduce stress prior to the hearing by providing a calm and quiet space to wait.</p> <p>Reduce anxiety prior by offering clear directions and posting simple courthouse rules</p> <p>Move from behind the bench to instead at the head of a table.</p> <p>Eliminate forms of non-verbal intimidations (jingling handcuffs or keys).</p> <p>Use caution when questioning about traumatic events.</p> <p>Have snacks on hand and available especially to children and youth waiting.</p> <p>Therapy dogs are shown to be effective in reducing trauma for children and youth in court.</p>

COURTROOM COMMUNICATION

JUDGE'S COMMENT	PERCEPTION OF TRAUMA SURVIVOR	TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH
"Your drug screen is dirty."	" <i>I'm dirty.</i> There is something wrong with me."	"Your drug screen shows the presence of drugs."
"Did you take your pills today?"	"I'm a failure. I'm a bad person. No one cares how the drugs make me feel."	"Are the medications your doctor prescribed working well for you?"
"You didn't follow the contract, you're going to jail; we're done with you. There is nothing more we can do."	"I'm hopeless. Why should I care how I behave in jail? They expect trouble anyway."	"Maybe what we've been doing isn't the best way for us to support you. I'm going to ask you not to give up on recovery. We're not going to give up on you."
"I'm sending you for a mental health evaluation."	"I must be crazy. There is something wrong with me that can't be fixed."	"I'd like to refer you to a doctor who can help us better understand how to support you."

SAMHSA, Essential Components of Trauma-Informed Judicial Practice, https://www.nasmhpd.org/sites/default/files/DRAFT_Essential_Components_of_Trauma_Informed_Judicial_Practice.pdf

What You Do: Court Processes and Procedures

So here I was, in front of this judge, asking for a restraining order against a family member who was also going to show up in that courtroom, and I was actively hearing voices. I was having a very hard time expressing what I needed to say to get the job done. The restraining order was against my grandfather, and the judge was an older man who looked like my grandfather. I couldn't speak. I had to try to articulate something that I was not even able to speak about very well in the first place. And I needed to do it quickly and succinctly.

*What the judge did was pretty incredible. He asked me to come forward. It created a sense of privacy. I didn't have to shout across a really busy courtroom. He really helped me in that simple act of asking me to come closer. I was able to do what I needed to do, and he was able to hear what he needed to hear. I had been in the mental health system for 14 years, and **this judge changed my life in that one simple act.** — Trauma Survivor*

Justice Professionals and Self-Care

- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics:
- There are approximately 800,000 Police Officers in the United States
- Statistics show that 20% to 25% of working police officers are chemically dependent on either alcohol or drugs (Police – The Law Enforcement Magazine)
- Statistically, that translates to 200,000 Police Officers battling addiction.

A Recent Study Found

- 85% of first responders have experienced issues related to their mental health (through cumulative and vicarious trauma)
- 55% of first responders believe their supervisor will treat them differently if they mention their mental health concerns.
- 69% said mental health services are seldom or never utilized.



Self Care as a Priority

[Resilient Wisconsin – Robin's Story](#)

Questions??



Thank you!

- Becky Haas
- <https://BeckyHaas.com>
- Email: Becky@Beckyhaas.com



(c) BeckyHaas.com 2024

