

Whole Child Task Force
Trauma Responsive & Trauma-Responsive Community Definition Groups
July 28, 2021

DRAFT DEFINITIONS

Trauma is defined according to the three E's: event, experience, and effects. Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, or emotional well-being (SAMHSA, 2014). Collective trauma is a psychological reaction to a traumatic event shared by any group of people **this may include but is not limited to community violence, lack of educational or economic opportunities, food, health and housing security, or community cohesion**. Trauma can be experienced by anyone, though they are disproportionately experienced by members of marginalized groups. Systematic inequities, particularly racism, are often at the root of this disproportionality. Of note, symptoms may vary at different developmental stages and across different cultural groups **and different communities**.

Schools/Districts: With the growing recognition of the prevalence and impact of trauma among children and adolescents, many **educational settings** are prioritizing the building of trauma responsive **learning environments**. Developing trauma responsive **learning environments** requires a multi-year long process. **Learning environments'** engagement in this process is ongoing; it typically progresses across three stages: (1) Trauma Awareness, (2) Trauma Responsiveness and (3) Healing Centeredness. See below for descriptions of these different stages.

Communities: **A trauma-aware community recognizes that it is multi-generational**

TRAUMA AWARE Schools/Districts staff demonstrate a foundational understanding of a broad definition of trauma (as defined by the WCTF) that is developmentally and culturally-based and includes students, staff and communities and recognizes the potential effect on biological, cognitive, academic and social-emotional functioning. Schools/Districts recognize that traumatic exposure can impact behavior and learning and should be acknowledged in policies, strategies and systems of support for students, families and staff.

TRAUMA RESPONSIVE Schools/Districts are progressing from awareness to action, in the areas of policy, practice, and structural changes within a multi-tiered system of support to promote safety, positive relationships, and self-regulation while underscoring the importance of staff well-being and cultural responsiveness. Changes should also be aligned to the Illinois Quality Framework (IQF) and integrated into a school's continuous improvement process, as evidence to support allocation of financial resources. A multidisciplinary leadership team assesses and monitors progress on an ongoing basis and promotes engagement and capacity building of staff all levels to ensure that adults in the community are prepared to recognize and respond to those impacted by trauma. **Trauma-responsive communities are...**

HEALING CENTERED Schools/Districts acknowledge their role and responsibility to the community and to fully respond to trauma and promote resilience and healing through genuine, trusting and creative relationships. Schools/districts should promote holistic and collaborative approaches that are grounded in culture, spirituality, civic engagement and equity. This approach recognizes the inherent strength **and**

supporting agency within individuals, families and communities while engaging people in collective action that moves from transactional to transformational.

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