



## **WHAT IS TRAUMA?**

Trauma results from an event, series of events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA, 2014). Some examples of events experienced as traumatic are: disasters; war; physical/sexual/emotional abuse; domestic violence; neglect; accidents/injuries; death of a loved one. What makes something traumatic is the individual's perception of the event or situation as threatening. No one can decide for someone else whether or not an event or experience is traumatic.

## **WHAT IS TOXIC STRESS?**

It is helpful to think of toxic stress as part of a continuum of stress. There are three types of stress: positive, tolerable, and toxic. We all get stressed from time to time and if it is brief and we have the right type of supports or coping skills in place, we can recover from it. Toxic stress is the result of the repeated, prolonged activation of the body's stress response system. The chemical changes that occur in the body can weaken the body and the brain. When it occurs in children, the developing brain is affected in ways that can impact learning, behavior, and physical and mental health long-term. Toxic stress in children can be caused by extreme poverty, neglect, abuse, or severe maternal depression. (Harvard University Center on the Developing Child). In adults, toxic stress can occur as a result of ongoing work or personal life stressors.

## **WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE?**

Trauma-informed care (TIC) is an approach that takes into account the prevalence of trauma, acknowledges the role trauma plays in people's lives, and uses this knowledge to respond in appropriate ways to those affected by trauma.

When an organization is trauma-informed, every part of the organization understands the impact of trauma, and policies, procedures, and service delivery have been re-designed to incorporate the principles of trauma-informed care. The 6 Principles of Trauma-Informed Care, which apply to both consumers and staff, are as follows:

1. Safety
2. Trustworthiness and transparency
3. Peer support and mutual self-help
4. Collaboration and mutuality
5. Empowerment, voice, and choice
6. Recognition of cultural, historical, and gender issues

\* (For more information - SAMSA-TIP 57)

## **WHY IS TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IMPORTANT?**

The Tristate Trauma Network feels that trauma-informed care is important because it promotes healing and recovery in those who have experienced trauma and toxic stress. People deserve the opportunity to heal in a safe, supportive, and empowering environment where trauma-specific services have been put in place and the possibility of being re-traumatized has been minimized.

## **HOW DOES TRAUMA AFFECT PEOPLE?**

According to the Adverse Childhood Events Survey (ACE), trauma experiences cause suffering for many people:

- It has no boundaries with regard to age, gender, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, geography and sexual orientation
- Almost 2/3 of the general population reported at least one adverse childhood experience of physical, sexual abuse, neglect, serious family problems and 1 of 5 reported 3 or more such experiences
- 90% of people using public mental health services have been exposed to trauma
- Research and experience tells us that people who have experienced cumulative and compounded trauma are at greater risk to use substances in a harmful manner; have symptoms of anxiety and depression including risk of suicide, being in harmful relationships, suffer from physical health problems, and find it difficult to manage day-to-day responsibilities.