



STATE OF CONNECTICUT
Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services



Commissioner's Policy Statement and Implementing Procedures

SUBJECT:	Trauma Services Policy
P & P NUMBER:	Chapter 6.5
APPROVED:	Patricia Rehmer, Commissioner <i>PR</i> Date: April 15, 2010
EFFECTIVE DATE:	April 15, 2010
REVISED:	New
REFERENCES:	
FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS:	

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE: The purpose of this policy is to foster a health care system that employs and practices principles that are trauma sensitive and trauma-informed to individuals served by the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services and funded agencies.

POLICY: Trauma sensitivity shall be a governing principle of DMHAS. Services within this system must meet the needs of individuals who have experienced trauma by establishing an environment that is safe, protects privacy and confidentiality, and eliminates the potential for re-victimization. DMHAS shall promote recovery by understanding trauma and its effects on individuals and their families. DMHAS providers shall be sensitive and respectful towards individuals while encouraging autonomy and hope. Individual strengths shall be a major focus in guiding individuals with a history of trauma towards recovery.

DEFINITION AND EFFECTS OF TRAUMA: Trauma refers to extreme stress that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope. Trauma involves events or experiences that confront the person directly or as a witness to a real or perceived threat of death, human suffering, severe bodily harm or injury, coercive exploitation or harassment, sexual violation, violence motivated by ethno cultural prejudice, gender, sexual orientation, or politically based.

Psychological trauma has a direct impact on the brain through associated physical, neurological, and stress response systems. These experiences directly and indirectly affect mood, memory, judgment, and involvement in relationships and work. The psychobiological impact of trauma leads to a sense of fear, helplessness, horror, detachment, and/or confusion. It also impacts an individual's perception towards self, others, and the world. The potential for reactivity to safety concerns in the treatment environment must be consciously and thoughtfully planned in order to create an environment conducive to healing and recovery.

Experiences of trauma (such as childhood physical or sexual abuse or neglect, or adult domestic violence) are a betrayal of basic human values and often cause lasting and severe post-traumatic impairment in the survivor's basic sense of self, trust in others, involvement in society, culture, health and integrity of his/her body.

A high percentage of individuals with severe and persistent behavioral health difficulties have experienced the direct or indirect effects of trauma. Many suffer from post-traumatic symptoms exacerbating other behavioral health problems, impairing psychosocial functioning and interfering with the quality of their lives.

TRAUMA INFORMED SYSTEM:

A trauma sensitive system of care has developed approaches which are both trauma-specific and trauma-informed. Providers must have an understanding of trauma and the effects and symptoms displayed by the individuals within the system. The system must be designed in such a way to allow individuals to participate in their own recovery without possibility of re-traumatization. The goal of an integrative approach is to recognize and be cognizant of the fact that mental illness and substance abuse often coincide with trauma, thereby necessitating that all aspects of an individual's needs be treated concurrently.

Trauma-specific services include techniques which are designed to assist individuals with a history of trauma in managing dissociative symptoms; desensitization therapies which help render painful images more tolerable; and behavioral therapies which teach skills for the modulation of powerful emotions (Harris & Fallot, 2001).

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: DMHAS shall:

- Recognize that the majority of individuals seeking services and/or are currently involved in services have at one point in their life experienced trauma. Trauma sensitive services must be applied universally to every individual.
- Identify and screen for individuals who have experienced trauma. Universal trauma screening should be appropriate to the service setting and should be performed upon intake. An appropriate assessment of trauma exposure, history and symptoms as well as linkage to trauma-specific services that are developed specifically to an individual's desired outcome.
- Education shall be provided to all staff members:
 - on the potential effects and impact on therapeutic relationships and employee wellbeing.
 - on personal and professional boundaries and on understanding behaviors of individuals with a history of trauma.
 - on cultural competence and gender sensitivity
- on the promotion of a system that is both trauma informed and sensitive
- Provide adequate supervision and training to prevent employees from experiencing compassion fatigue and/or vicarious traumatization.

- Provide clear and specific services to individuals. Individuals receiving services must be informed of their rights, who they will be working with, what goals they wish to achieve, and the expectations of their participation. Boundaries should be made clear and be consistent in order to achieve trustworthiness.
- Focus on individual choice as a way to maximize autonomy and empowerment. Individuals should have a right to choose the services they receive and who provides them. Recovery is achieved by giving individuals control in making their own decisions and choosing goals that are relevant to their progress.
- Increase collaboration and shared power between the individual and the service provider. Individuals will have a role in evaluating the agency's services. Individuals will be present in service planning, goal setting and in all other facets of treatment. Individuals will be seen as the expert on his or her recovery.
- Empower individuals and teach skill building as an integral part of the services being provided. There should be an emphasis on individual growth and a focus on individual strength. Contact with providers should give individuals the opportunity to complete a task and learn a new skill.