






Trauma-Informed Approach in Adolescent Health


Six Core Principles Worksheet

Read the descriptions of each core principle below and review the real-world examples. Following the meeting, fill out the far-right column, as you reflect on how your program currently integrates the six core principles in its policies, practices, and through individual behaviors of staff.

Core principles ¹	Real-world examples	How we currently integrate trauma-informed principles
 <p>Safety</p> <p>All youth, community partners, and staff feel physically and psychologically safe.</p> <p>The physical program setting is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety.</p> <p>Understanding safety as defined by those served by the program is a high priority.</p>	<p><i>For youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe and implement a predictable program routine. • Use group agreements. • Use value-neutral language; avoid shaming language. • Use LGBTQ inclusive language. • Educate students on ways to help themselves, including providing resources related to mental health services. • Encourage self-care techniques such as putting their head down, stepping out of the room, and using an established signal if they feel uncomfortable or triggered. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide opportunities to examine attitudes and values. • Encourage and provide resources for self-care. • Reach out to a supervisor to discuss challenging situations. • Understand mandated reporting. 	
 <p>Trustworthy</p> <p>Program decisions, implementation, and evaluation are conducted with transparency; the goal is to build and maintain trust with youth, community partners, staff, and others involved in your organization or network.</p>	<p><i>For youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show you care by building rapport, listening, and empathizing. • Remind them throughout the program that you are there for them if they ever need to talk. • Provide disclaimers about what the program will be talking about. • Provide clear information about confidentiality and reporting. • If you do have to make a report, let the young person know, involve them in the process (if appropriate), and explain next steps. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show you care by building rapport, listening, and empathizing. • Provide ongoing communication about program decisions, implementation, and evaluation data. 	

¹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. Available at [ncsacw.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf](https://www.samhsa.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf).

Core principles ¹	Real-world examples	How we currently integrate trauma-informed principles
 <p>Peer support</p> <p>Peer support is key to establishing safety and hope, building trust, enhancing collaboration, and promoting recovery and healing</p>	<p><i>For youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage youth during program implementation through role plays. Provide opportunities to answer each other's questions. Normalize the experience of trauma and responses. Provide resources for peer support groups. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Openly talk about feelings of stress or burnout, along with the need for support. Have an outlet when working with youth who have experienced trauma. 	
 <p>Collaboration</p> <p>Your program recognizes everyone has a role to play in a trauma-informed approach.</p> <p>Relationships, partnerships, and meaningful sharing of power and decision-making are important.</p>	<p><i>For youth:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ask youth for input through a youth advisory group, pilots, implementation, and evaluation. Be responsive to youth input and suggestions. Create space and various ways for youth to ask questions and receive answers. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach topics related to a trauma-informed approach. Talk with teachers to prepare them for upcoming content and discuss strategies for supporting youth, especially youth who may have known trauma. Create and maintain multidisciplinary partnerships. 	
 <p>Empowerment, voice and choice</p> <p>Youth, community partners, and staff strengths, experiences, and resilience are recognized and expanded upon.</p> <p>Program operations, workforce development, and services foster empowerment for staff and youth alike.</p> <p>Youth are supported in shared decision making, choice, self-advocacy, and goal setting.</p> <p>Staff are empowered to do their work well with adequate organizational support.</p>	<p><i>For students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize youth as experts on their own lived experiences. For youth who have experienced trauma, empower them to regain control. Clearly address and define consent. Create opportunities for youth to make decisions throughout the program. Provide opportunities for youth to practice skills. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Empower staff and partners to know that they can make a difference in young people's lives. Provide ongoing opportunities for workforce development. 	

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 <p>Cultural, historical, and gender issues</p> <p>Your program actively moves past stereotypes and biases based on race, ethnicity, age, gender identity, sexual orientation, religion, geography, etc.</p> <p>Your program offers access to gender responsive services, leverages the healing value of traditional cultural connections, and is responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of youth served.</p> <p>Your program recognizes and addresses historical trauma.</p>	<p><i>For students:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with youth about the issues that are important to them. • Recognize the conditions in which youth live, learn, work, and play as well as the systems that influence these environments. <p><i>For staff/partners:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take different perspectives into account. • Understand cultural differences when it comes to trauma and talking about trauma. • Understand how trauma uniquely impacts different groups, such as LGBTQ youth or Black, Indigenous, and other youth of color. • Establish a referral network responsive to the needs of the youth your program serves. 	