



## Module 2: Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care

### Goal

It is imperative for MEP service providers to understand trauma in order to effectively reach migratory students and their families. A significant percentage of this community has been, and often continues to be, exposed to potentially traumatic experiences. Exposure to traumatic events in childhood, particularly with inadequate adult support, can significantly disrupt an individual's development of core social-emotional competencies, such as emotional and behavioral regulation, problem solving, planning, and prosocial skills. Disrupted development places children at greater risk for adverse emotional, functional, and academic outcomes.

Though the effects vary, the concept of trauma is defined as an experience, threat, or witnessing of physical harm that overwhelms a person's ability to cope. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) explains that individual trauma "is a result 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, emotional, or spiritual well-being."

This module will help participants identify situations that cause trauma and the various symptoms of trauma—which can be emotional, physical, or psychological in nature and can range from short-term temporary symptoms to long-term symptoms that people experience for the rest of their lives. Trauma often interferes with an ability to correctly receive and communicate information, and to fully understand the world.

Finally, this module addresses the importance of understanding the paradigm shift from asking, "What is wrong with you?" to, "What happened to you?"

### Objectives

- Describe the core principles of trauma and trauma-informed care.
- Define trauma in its various forms—acute, chronic, and complex—and describe their impact on the brain.
- Identify the unique trauma(s) that can affect the migratory population.
- Demonstrate an understanding of both risk and protective factors.
- Emphasize the impact of positive relationships.



## **What to Know Before Presenting the Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care PowerPoint**

1. Introduce the concept of trauma and trauma-informed care.

The connection between trauma and its short- and long-term effects on the brain is profound. Some types of stress simply present a challenge and can make one stronger and healthier. However, frequent and prolonged activity that activates the stress response system (toxic stress response) keeps brains in the flight-or-fight stage. The brain responds to this by organizing itself around surviving and turning off the parts responsible for positive development, reasoning, emotion, and learning.

2. Identify the unique causes of trauma among the migratory population and reflect on how those challenges affect your MEP and the students you serve.

There are additional causes of trauma specific to the migratory community that go beyond common types of trauma. These experiences may include discrimination, war and community violence, displacement from home and community, flight and migration, death of loved ones, extreme poverty, sexual assault, separation from family, living in refugee or detention camps, and interrupted education. Learning about these various trauma causes will assist participants to better navigate relationships with MEP students and families and minimize those effects of trauma.

3. Discuss risks and protective factors associated with trauma and develop ways that each student can maximize their protective factors.

Using trauma-informed practices and knowledge, service providers will learn to recognize students' strengths, assets, and contributions, and offer opportunities to increase positive experiences to support every student's ability to reach their own potential. Participants will learn to develop and model their own social-emotional skills, use self-care practices that allow them to be supportive adults for their students, and actively engage mental health supports as their need for them arises.

4. Stress that services and supports can help reduce the long-term effects of trauma and that trauma-informed care is the best approach to fostering social-emotional development.

Using the core principles of trauma-informed care, each service provider and student will be able to recognize the elements that can create a safe, reliable environment and relationships in which students who have experienced trauma feel supported and welcome to explore their strengths and identities, recognize their abilities, develop positive relationships with adults and peers in their community, and have access to the mental health supports they need.



The messages in the Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care PowerPoint emphasize an individual's ability to:

- **Understand the effects of trauma.**
  - Learning the deep impact that trauma can have illuminates the conversation about short- and long-term effects and how to address those effects successfully.
- **Learn the research.**
  - This area of mental health is growing rapidly with new research and resources.
  - There are many national-level organizations that can be trusted to present the latest news and tools to support trauma-informed care.
- **Take charge of one's environment.**
  - Understanding the importance of trauma-informed care allows service providers to purposefully build their program to offer effective tools to those affected by trauma.
- **Cultivate the ability to offer support.**
  - Service providers need the confidence to offer appropriate supports to their students.
  - While service providers are not mental health professionals, they are often the first to see the effects of trauma and it is important for them to be ready with strong resources and referrals for students and their families.
- **Help others understand the topic.**
  - Service providers can offer encouragement and resources to others in the migratory community.