

Incorporating a trauma-informed approach in Washington

Background

In 2016, Gov. Jay Inslee issued an executive order to establish the Washington State Blue Ribbon Commission on Delivery of Services to Children and Families. The commission's final report included several recommendations, including incorporating trauma-informed approaches and care throughout the system.

The Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) convened a multi-stakeholder cross agency learning collaborative called Multi System Trauma Informed Care (MSTIC), with technical assistance from Chapin Hall. The group developed strategy for a state agency implementation plan. The other state agencies engaged in this work include: Health Care Authority (HCA), the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).

The implementation plan for state agencies includes two aims for using trauma-informed approaches to improving services:

Workforce and organizational development

How do we support our workforce to develop expertise in being trauma-informed and how does that inform the organizations policies and programs?

Programs and policies

How do we increase community engagement to influence agency policies and procedures to deliver a better client experience?

HCA's work

HCA has used federal mental health and substance use block grant dollars to plan and implement trauma-informed training and policy work.

Key development partners included:

- Community organizations through a survey
- MSTIC

- DOH
- Trauma Informed Oregon
- Federal partners and national experts

For this initiative, "behavioral health" is defined as prevention, intervention, treatment, and recovery supports for substance use disorder and community mental health service level for mental health following the federal block grant rules.

The initiative has several components detailed below. Each component includes data collection to help us identify future opportunities toward demonstrated need, desire, and to address lessons learned. This initiative funding ends in fall 2019.

Community grants

The intention of the grants is to fuel work already happening at the grassroots level around the state.

HCA awarded \$1.46 million in grants to 31 communities.


Grantees were required to have a community and a behavioral health partnership to move trauma informed approaches forward in their community. They must complete a readiness scan upon grant receipt, and follow it up two times with the last scan demonstrating any culture shift toward trauma-informed approach.

Training

HCA is offering five in-person training options on trauma-informed approach, a training for all individuals that directly connect with individuals seeking services, supervisors, agency leaders, and the broader community. Additionally there is a train the trainer training.

HCA contracted with [EnRoute](#), who partnered with the training founders of Trauma Informed Oregon to develop Washington specific curriculum based in Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's core trauma informed principles.





HCA will make available a shorter online version of each training for distance learning and support for agencies that want to support trauma-informed culture as they onboard and implement trauma-informed strategies.

State agency implementation

State agency implementation champions meet regularly. DOH has paved the way and shares its implementation updates and tools developed for the group.

This work is unfolding differently in each state agency:

HCA – Training, coaching and technical assistance on the trauma-informed approach to staff working in behavioral health and juvenile rehabilitation as well as those working in the system surrounding those services. Also providing grants to local organizations for their work in becoming trauma informed.

DCYF - Convening a cross-agency staff group to guide their work on becoming trauma-informed and planning an agency assessment. Completed work for House Bill 2861 making [recommendations](#) on trauma informed practices in early child care; implementation of some recommendations (e.g., professional development, expulsion prevention) is now beginning. Juvenile Rehabilitation (JR) received one of the community grants in partnership with Coordinated Care. In-person surveys and listening sessions are in process with youth in residential programs and counseling personnel. Planning events are scheduled in September with JR personnel to inform creation of an implementation plan to include grass-roots, peer-influenced leadership in executing the trauma-informed approach.

DOH – DOH has developed a logic model and road map, and initiated integrating the trauma-informed principles into their work on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and all staff trainings. They are aligning the internal efforts with the work with local partners. They are also providing grants to local organizations for their work in becoming trauma informed.

DSHS - Work on becoming trauma informed is a part of the recommendations under development in the report from the Poverty Reduction Workgroup.

OSPI – Their work, which began in 2009 under the umbrella of [The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resilience and Academic Success](#) or more commonly called “Compassionate Schools” is the most widely embraced trauma-informed approach that has unfolded in K-12 schools around the state. In addition, OSPI is encouraging regional Educational Service District staff to actively engage in local partnerships and attend the HCA trainings currently unfolding across the state.

Key staff from these agencies have seen a connection with the work Renee Smith at the Governor’s Results Washington office, is leading on Making Work More Human. Connections and collaboration with multiple state and community partners are in development as the work moves forward.

HCA and partners are evaluating options for continued support of state agency implementation and support for training and train the trainer work beyond this current funding period.

Partners and potential partners

Intentional work has been done by all MSTIC members to develop effective partnerships that will enhance the ability of the HCA initiative to continue beyond the short window for the current funds.

Agencies are working to identify what they are already doing that moves this work forward, both for employees as well as policies and procedures that move this work to client services and workforce supports.

Technical assistance networks on the regional and national level are supporting the work, as well as national experts in the work informing the process.

For more information

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<https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/trauma-informed-approach-tia>