A Trauma Informed Approach to Public Library Social Service

Trudi Green
Assistant Director for Public Services

Jennifer Elkins
Associate Professor & MSW Program Director

This project was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services
What is TILT?

An IMLS-funded project designed to assist the Athens Regional Library System to embed trauma-informed practices in order to best support the multi-faceted needs of at-risk and vulnerable patrons as well as provide organizational supports for staff to best inform trauma awareness, cultural sensitivity, and best practices in delivering support services to individuals and the community.
Setting The Stage
Our Library System

- 5 counties
- 11 libraries
- 232,000 population served
- 76,700 card holders
Library Staff Demographics

- 66% of the 140 library staff (n=93) participated
- Status: 52.6% were PT and 47.4% were FT
- Role: 48.0% Public Service; 26.7% Management; 25.3% Operations
- Race/Ethnicity: 74% White; 5% Black; 3% Hispanic/Latinx; 18% Other
- Gender Pronouns: 68% she/her; 21% he/him; 3% They/Them; 8% Other

% Years of Experience

- 1 year or less: 30%
- 1-2 years: 24%
- 2-5 years: 23%
- 6-10 years: 14%
- 11-20 years: 14%
- >20 years: 9%
The “most pressing problems” library patrons face...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Youth Patrons</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Adult Patrons</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Total (Youth &amp; Adult)</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Disruptive behavior</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Poverty</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Academic issues</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mental health illness</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>Mental health illness</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>Disruptive behavior</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Inadequate childcare</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Stress</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>Homelessness</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Child abuse &amp; neglect</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Substance use/abuse</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Health issues</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Family violence</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Food security</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Unemployment</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Illiteracy</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>Social isolation</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Demographics (2010 Census data, unless noted)

Racial Makeup (2015 est.)
- White – 65.4%
- Black – 27.5%
- Asian – 4.5%
- Other – 1.3%

Hispanic or Latino – 10.6%
(may be any race above)

47.5% Male
52.5% Female

5th Most populous of Georgia’s 535 cities
19th Most populous of Georgia’s 159 counties

Population, including students (2015 est.)......123,912
UGA Athens only enrollment (Fall 2016).........35,162
Median age in years ....................................26.2
Median household income ...........................$33,060
High school graduates (ages 25+) .................85.5%
Bachelor’s degree (ages 25+) .........................39.3%
Persons below poverty level .........................37.8%
Unemployment (GA Dept. of Labor, Oct 2016)....5.3%

Source: https://www.athensclarkecounty.com/
Guiding Frameworks
The Pair of ACEs

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Maternal Depression
Emotional & Sexual Abuse
Substance Abuse
Domestic Violence
Homelessness

Physical & Emotional Neglect
Divorce
Mental Illness
Incarceration

Adverse Community Environments

Poverty
Discrimination
Community Disruption
Lack of Opportunity, Economic Mobility & Social Capital

Violence
Poor Housing Quality & Affordability

What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) recognizes that traumatic experiences **terrify, overwhelm** and **violate** the individual. TIC is a commitment not to repeat these experiences and, in whatever way possible, to **restore a sense of safety, power and worth**.

### The Foundations of Trauma Informed Care

- **Commitment to Trauma Awareness**
- **Understanding the Impact of Historical Trauma and Oppression**

Agencies Demonstrate Trauma Informed Care with Policies, Procedures and Practices that:

#### Create Safe Context through:
- Physical safety
- Trustworthiness
- Clear and consistent boundaries
- Transparency
- Predictability
- Choice

#### Restore Power through:
- Choice
- Empowerment
- Strengths perspective
- Skill building

#### Build Self-Worth through:
- Relationship
- Respect
- Compassion
- Acceptance and Nonjudgment
- Mutuality
- Collaboration

*Image Credit: Trauma Informed Oregon, 2014*
SAMHSA’S 6 PRINCIPLES
of a
TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

SAFETY
Prevents violence across the lifespan and creates safe physical environments.

TRUSTWORTHINESS
Fosters positive relationships among residents, City Hall, police, schools and others.

EMPOWERMENT
Ensures opportunities for growth are available for all.

COLLABORATION
Promotes involvement of residents and partnership among agencies.

PEER SUPPORT
Engages residents to work together on issues of common concern.

HISTORY, GENDER, CULTURE
Values and supports history, culture and diversity.
Through a Culturally Specific Lens

• **Realizing** the prevalence of trauma individually & collectively and the presence of strength & resilience (both individual & collective).

• **Recognizing** how trauma affects, directly and indirectly, all individuals involved with the program, organization, or system, including its own workforce by recognizing how survivors bring to the forefront inner and collective growth.

• **Responding** by putting this knowledge into practice by learning from community, promoting safety and cultural wellness.

• **Resisting** re-traumatization by drawing from cultural resiliency, traditional healing tools and collective wisdom.

• **Rebuilding connection** to community, family and kin, country, culture, body-mind and spirit-spirituality
Program Design
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Becoming Trauma Informed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Needs Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Work Interns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policy Review</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Staff Training Topics

• QPR (Question Persuade Refer)
• A Social Worker Walked Into A Library
• Empathy & Self Care In A Trauma-informed Library
• De-escalation Techniques
Social Work Intern

Office Hours...

• Three days a week
• Walk-ins
• Brokered referrals
Site Visits…

• Connect staff/intern pairs with agencies
• Three areas:
  – Housing/Transportation/Food Sustainability
  – Employment/Financial Literacy/Education
  – Mental Health/Medical Health/Social Services
Weekly Tabling...

- Themed events
- Great for outreach
- Agencies welcomed
Policy Review…

Assessing library policies and the physical environment to ensure they are following trauma-informed principles
Incorporating A TIC Framework Into Libraries Includes:

- Staff training on trauma, TIC, recognizing triggers, practices that can serve patrons more effectively
- Implementing practices to help patrons regulate emotions, understanding why patron behaviors and reactions
- Providing holistic, integrated librarianship that includes facilitating access to local resources
- Culturally responsive programming that nurtures culturally-specific protective factors in diverse populations
- Reviewing policies, practices, & procedures to avoid re-traumatizing customers
- Conducting an environmental scan to create a safe, calm, and welcoming building for patrons
A Trauma-Informed Approach to Public Library Social Service: A Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNF1Ef8kG98
Thank You! Questions? Comments?

Trudi Green
tgreen@athenslibrary.org

Jennifer Elkins
ejlkins@uga.edu