



Transitioning to a Trauma-Informed Model

Mountain Home Public Schools

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The Need:

- More than one out of every two children (56%) in Arkansas have Experienced at least 1 Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE).
 - Compared to around 45% nationwide
- Around 1 out of every 3 children in Arkansas have experienced two or more ACEs.
- More than 80% of suicides in adolescents can be linked to ACEs
 - Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in Adolescents
 - In Arkansas 23% of adolescents have had thoughts of suicide and 16% have attempted.

The Need:

- Problems plaguing our students include stress, anxiety, bullying, family problems, depression, learning disability, social media pressure, vaping, and substance abuse.
- Trauma dramatically increases the risk for 7 out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the United States. In high doses, it affects brain development, the immune system, hormonal systems, and even the way our DNA is read and transcribed. Folks who are exposed in very high doses have triple the lifetime risk of heart disease and lung cancer and a 20-year difference in life expectancy.
- Mentally healthy children are more successful in school and life. Research demonstrates that students who receive social-emotional and mental health support achieve better academically. Left unmet, mental health problems are linked to costly negative outcomes such as academic and behavior problems, dropping out, and delinquency.

The Need:

- The three “E’s” of trauma
- Trauma refers to 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**.

The Need:

- Examples of Trauma:
 - Natural disasters, Accidents, Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Exposure to violence, Death/Loss, Poverty, Bullying, Prejudice
 - **Complex Trauma** - refers to exposure to multiple traumatic events from an early age, **and** the immediate and long-term effects of these experiences over development.

The Need:

- **Trauma-Informed Care**: Becoming trauma-informed is a process using knowledge about the prevalence and impact of toxic stress (e.g., ACEs) to reexamine how we see, interpret, and interact with people. TIC is a culture change process - being trauma-informed requires viewing the world through a new lens. It is not a therapy, intervention, or specific action; it is an all encompassing paradigm shift. It's also important to remember that trauma-informed care is not just for service providers; it is universally applicable and everyone has a role to play! - From Fostering Futures website.
- Being "Trauma-Informed" involves a shift in viewing students from a lens of "what is wrong with you" to a new lens of "what has happened to you".

Our Situation:

- MHPS began the process of becoming more Trauma-Sensitive through initial SBMH staff training.
 - 2016-2017 school year SBMH coordinator became certified in:
 - Arkansas Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
 - Certified Clinical Trauma Professional
 - District/School Board funded these and other trainings to begin preparing to utilize SBMH coordinator to train staff.
- The following year, MHPS was approved by the ADE and Medicaid to begin our own SBMH program, and SBMH coordinator began working with students and families affected by trauma in our district.

Our Situation:

- After beginning to work with students and families during the 2017-2018 school year, SBMH coordinator began working to introduce trauma informed concepts with staff, students, and families. This included using language and incorporating “trauma lenses” in conferences such as behavior and IEP.
- Also during the 2017-2018 school year, SBMH coordinator and one of our SROs became certified trainers for Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA).
 - We began training staff and community members in MHFA during the 17-18 school year
 - MHFA certification includes much education on trauma informed-practices, which again was a part of the early introduction to trauma-sensitivity in our school.
 - All leadership team, all school counselors, and many teachers, parents, and community members are now certified in MHFA.

Our Situation:

- Before the start of this school year (2019-2020) we conducted our first school wide Trauma-Sensitive Training.
 - Each certified staff member completed the first two components of Phase One of the “Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package”.
 - The Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package consists of 3 total parts
 - Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
 - Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools
 - Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools

Our Situation:

- Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package
 - Is free of charge for schools
 - Comes highly recommended by the DESE SBMH department
 - Incorporates in-person trainings, slideshows, handouts, and group exercises
 - Also incorporates a web-based tool that is interactive to continue beyond the training.
 - <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package>
 - National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Our Situation:

- Each of our school counselors have now been through the entire first phase of the Trauma Sensitive Schools Training Package (Understanding Trauma and Its Impact).
 - Our school counselors are now working to utilize trauma-sensitive approaches with our students along with helping promote the culture, interventions, and language of trauma sensitivity to our staff and teachers.
- Two of our agency-based therapists at High School and Junior High are also in the process of becoming TF-CBT certified.
- Sent SBMH coordinator, two school counselors, and EAST coordinator to Trauma Informed Training with specialist Heather Forbes in October.

Our Situation:

- We have begun a “Self-Care” initiative at our Junior High Campus
 - This involved training the JH staff on the dangers of stress, internalizing, and poor coping skills, along with the importance of self-care and healthy coping strategies
 - This involved an in-person training with all JH students that was followed by small group continuation through advisory class.
 - Dangers and warning signs of stress and trauma
 - How to find help for self and others
 - How to practice healthy self-care
 - Data collection

Our Plan Continued:

- We are scheduled to complete the final two portions of the “Understanding Trauma and Its Impact” phase with our entire leadership team within the month of November, along with with more extensive training on the Web-Based tools.
 - This will enable leadership, including special education directors, principals, and assistant principals to begin utilizing Trauma Informed decision making and approaches with students and families, and help shift the culture of our staff in this direction.
- We are also planning to train teachers/staff at the Junior High and High school levels on the final two portions listed above before the close of this first semester.

Goals :

- To have our entire staff trained in full on the first phase “Understanding Trauma and Its Impact,” at the close of this school year.
- To have our entire staff trained on the second phase “Building a Trauma-Sensitive School” by the first day of school next year.
- To become trauma-informed as a school culture with trauma lenses shaping the way we educate, discipline, and form relationships with students and families.
- To begin promoting resiliency and self-care as a part of our “hidden curriculum” across all grade levels.
- To have staff operating from a regulated (calm, focused, relaxed) state despite stressors around them, operating as models of healthy functioning.
- To ensure that our students feel safe, listened to, cared for, and comfortable with anything surrounding their school.
- To ensure that our students have the relaxation and regulation skills to operate in healthy ways outside of school as well.

Where Are We Now?

- Promoting Self-Care and healthy coping skills to employees through professional development.
- Began Self-Care initiative at Junior High.
- Ensure that no student in need is without services, regardless of payor source.
- Recently received grant from DESE to support our school-based mental health efforts
- Partnership with Arkansas State University internships

A blue-tinted photograph of a community event. In the foreground, a young boy with a rainbow face paint and a girl with a 'HOPE' t-shirt are looking towards the camera. The background shows a large room with many people, including children and adults, some sitting on chairs and others standing. The overall atmosphere is busy and social.

Questions from the audience