

## Community-based Organizations: Resources and Supports for Family and Caregivers

### Finding the Right Kind of Help

Providing care for children or youth in crisis can come with some extra burdens for families and caregivers. Additional people are involved in the children's lives and the families' and caregiver's lives such as social workers, doctors, therapists, case managers, etc. People may talk down to families or caregivers or act like they know what's best without hearing everyone's opinions or experiences. This can cause frustration to the families and caregivers trying to understand how to get through this crisis.

### What Is Trauma and Trauma-informed Care?

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) definition of trauma has three elements.

Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as overwhelming or life-changing and that has profound **effects** on the individual's psychological development or well-being, often involving a physiological, social and/or spiritual impact (SAMHSA 2019).

What family members and their children have gone through has most likely been traumatic. It's probably taken a toll on their health and overall well-being. It's important to work with people who understand the effects of trauma. SAMHSA provides four R's that define a trauma-informed program, organization or system:

- **Realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery. This means trauma can affect how individuals eat, sleep, work – all aspects of life. A trauma-informed provider will be aware of several ways to help individuals recover from trauma.
- **Recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff and others involved with the system. A trauma-informed agency recognizes that anyone could be a trauma survivor and acts accordingly.
- **Resists** re-traumatization. The staff have an individual's safety and comfort in mind. They take into consideration what they've been through and what could cause the individual or their child to remember or re-experience a traumatic event.
- **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, practices and settings. From the CEO to the receptionist to the psychotherapist to the cleaning staff – everyone should know about trauma and its effects.

### Finding the Right Care Providers Who Work *with* You

Navigating the foster care system can feel like a maze. Families and caregivers want support and guidance to get through it – not someone to do everything for them. Here are some things to look for in a care provider:

- **A safe, calm and secure environment with supportive care** –walking into the facility or office, should make an individual feel safe. Staff should be welcoming and kind.

- **Cultural competence and humility.** People take member’s and patient’s cultural background in to consideration and do not assume they know everything about their lived experience.
- **Client and staff voice, choice and advocacy.** Members and patients feel seen, heard and understood. Care providers defer to their preferences.
- **Recovery-oriented, consumer-driven, trauma-specific services.** Care staff help members’ or patients and their families on the road to trauma recovery. Service planning is centered around the member’s or patient’s needs.
- **Healing, hopeful, honest and trusting relationships.** Healing only happens in relationships.

## What You Can Do

Here are some questions to ask when considering a potential foster care agency or other type of care provider:

- Is this a trauma-informed organization?
- How does this provider or agency provide trauma-informed care?
- Does the environment feel safe and inclusive?
- Does the family and member or patient have an empowered voice and choice in the services received?
- Does the member or patient feel taken care of? Are they given opportunities for respite?

## Resources

*How Social Workers & Foster Parents Save! Trauma Informed—Foster Care Motivational Speaker.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KenzbRpemY4>

Information about foster care for caregivers from the Sesame Street in Communities website:

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/foster-care/>

Parenting After Trauma: Understanding Your Child’s Needs, from HealthyChildren.org website:

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Parenting-Foster-Adoptive-Children-After-Trauma.aspx>

Resources for Families and Caregivers from The National Child Traumatic Stress Network website:

<https://www.nctsn.org/audiences/families-and-caregivers>

SAMHSA (2019). Trauma and Violence [Text]. Retrieved from <https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-violence>