

Minnesota Judicial Branch

Minnesota Department of Human Services

CJI

Children's Justice Initiative

# REGIONAL CJI TEAM MEETINGS

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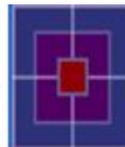
## Trauma & Child Welfare: What You Can Do Fall 2014

NCTSN

The National Child  
Traumatic Stress Network

Cal SWEC

Hand icon  
CiMH  
Helping You Make the Difference



CFPIC

Rady  
Children's  
San Diego

Chadwick Center  
for Children & Families

# Today.....

- Brief review of trauma
- Recognizing trauma in children
- Trauma & sexually exploited youth
- Psychotropic medications
- Recognizing trauma in adults
- Effective trauma-informed strategies that support the Seven Essential Elements of a Child Welfare System

# What is child trauma?

- Witnessing or experiencing events that pose real or perceived threats
- The events overwhelm the child's ability to cope



# What is child traumatic stress?

- Physical and emotional responses of a child to threatening situations
- Impacts a child's capacity to cope
- Elicits feelings of terror, powerlessness
- Stimulates out-of-control physiological arousal

# Other Sources of Ongoing Stress

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Separations from parent/siblings
- Frequent moves
- School problems
- Traumatic grief and loss
- Refugee or immigrant experiences

...can lead to **TOXIC** stress



# “ReMoved” video



WHAT IMPACT DOES THIS VIDEO  
HAVE ON YOU?

WHAT TRAUMA TRIGGERS DID YOU  
OBSERVE FOR ZOE?

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# Why is this important?

Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not be itself undo the serious consequences or reverse the negative impacts of early fear learning. There is no doubt that children in harm's way should be removed from a dangerous situation. However, simply moving a child out of immediate danger does not in itself reverse or eliminate the way that he or she has learned to be fearful. The child's memory retains those learned links, and such thoughts and memories are sufficient to elicit ongoing fear and make a child anxious.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2010). *Persistent Fear and Anxiety Can Affect Young Children's Learning and Development Working Paper No. 9*. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu)

# What you can do

- Incorporate strategies from the Seven Essential Elements into your practice...



# RECOGNIZING TRAUMA: CHILDREN

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Trauma & Child Welfare: What  
You Can Do

# Recognizing Trauma - Children

- **3 reactions –**
  - **Intrusive reactions** – not able to let go or forget (triggers)
  - **Avoidance reactions** – trying not to remember
  - **Physical reactions** – sleep, hormonal, stomach



# Recognizing Trauma - Children

- **Types of behaviors –**
  - **Over-controlled behavior**
    - Difficulty transitioning and changing routines,
    - Rigid behavioral patterns,
    - Repetitive behaviors, etc.

# Recognizing Trauma - Children

- **Types of behaviors –**
  - **Under-controlled behavior**
    - Impulsivity
    - Disorganization
    - Aggression
    - Other acting-out behaviors

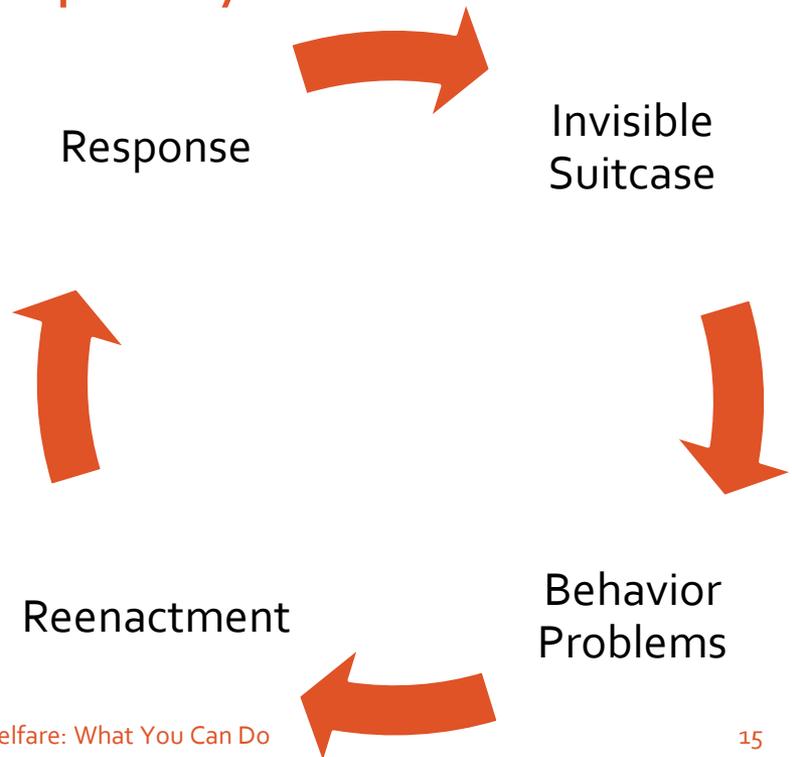
# Trauma Reminders

- People
- Situations
- Places
- Certain emotions/  
feelings
- Activities
- Objects
- Noises
- Smells



# Reenactment behaviors

- Behavior that seems unpredictable, “comes from no where”
- Child switches, changes quickly
- Behavior seems driven
- Physiological response



# Early Childhood

- When there is interpersonal trauma, children and caregivers may serve as traumatic reminders for one another.
- Attachment figures can mediate the child's response to a trauma.
- Caregiver's response to the trauma often influences how the child perceives the trauma.



# School Aged Children

- Children with behavioral challenges lack skills because of differences in their brain development.
- Children lack problem solving skills such as frustration, tolerance, and emotion regulation.
- Trying to motivate them with rewards and punishments is not likely effective.

# Adolescents

- Considerations for adolescents impacted by trauma
- Positive youth development services, opportunities, and support are necessary
- Engagement in risky behaviors



# Multi-System Youth: Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice

- Maltreatment is a risk factor for delinquent behavior.<sup>1</sup>
- Educational, mental health, and substance abuse problems are prevalent.<sup>1</sup>
- Lack of cross-system communication leads to many youth falling through the cracks.<sup>1</sup>
- Outcomes include recidivism, adult criminal justice involvement, mental health and substance abuse problems, and need for public assistance.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Herz, D., Lee, P., Lutz, L., Stewart, M., Truell, J., & Wiig, J. (2012). Addressing the needs of multi-system youth: Strengthening the connection between child welfare and juvenile justice. Retrieved from the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's website: <http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/msy/AddressingtheNeedsofMultiSystemYouth.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Culhane, D. P., Byrne, T., Metraux, S., Moreno, M., Toros, H., & Stevens, M. (2011). Young adult outcomes of youth exiting dependent or delinquent care in Los Angeles County. Retrieved from [http://www.hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/media\\_resources/Young\\_Adult\\_Outcomes\\_of\\_Youth\\_Exiting\\_Dependent\\_or\\_Delinquent\\_Care\\_in\\_LA\\_County\\_Report.pdf](http://www.hiltonfoundation.org/images/stories/Downloads/media_resources/Young_Adult_Outcomes_of_Youth_Exiting_Dependent_or_Delinquent_Care_in_LA_County_Report.pdf)

# Trauma & Sexually Exploited Youth

Sexually Exploited Youth include, but is not limited to, an individual who is alleged to have engaged in conduct which would, if committed by an adult, violate any federal, state, or local law relating to being hired, offering to be hired, or agreeing to be hired by another individual to engage in sexual penetration or sexual conduct. [Minn. Stat. 260C.007].

# Safe Harbor Law

- Treats youth with dignity and respect, and directs them to appropriate supportive services, including shelter and housing
- Excludes sexually exploited youth under 18 from the definition of delinquent child

[Minn. Stat. 260C.007]

**SAFE HOUSE**

# Safe Harbor Law

- Adds the definition of sexually exploited youth to Minnesota's child protection codes
- Increases the penalties against commercial sex abusers or purchasers
- And Directs the Commissioner of Public Safety to devise a victim centered, statewide response for sexually exploited youth

[Minn. Stat. 260C.007]

# Something to think about...

- The average age of entry into sexual exploitation by minors is 12-14 years of age <sup>(3)</sup>
- 75% of girls who are entangled in sexually exploited networks are controlled by a sex trafficker or “pimp” <sup>(1)</sup>
- When asked 89% of women and girls being sexually exploited wanted to get out but didn’t know where to turn for help <sup>(2)</sup>



(1) "Richard J. Estes and Neil Weiner, "The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children In the U. S., Canada and Mexico," University of Pennsylvania, February 2002

(2) Melissa Farley, PhD and Howard Barkan, DrPH. "Prostitution, Violence Against Women, and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. Women and Health. Haworth Press, Inc. 1998

(3) The Polaris Project, "Street Prostitution" 2010

# Something to think about...

- American Indian (AI) girls and women experience sexual violence more frequently and have a much higher prevalence of being sexually exploited <sup>(1)</sup>
- AI youth have been found to be at greater risk than any other youth in the United States and Canada for sexual exploitation and trafficking <sup>(2)</sup>
- In 2012 & 2013, the Minneapolis Police Department reported that 30-50% of their sex trafficking cases involve AI Youth, while AI represent only 2% of Minnesota's total population <sup>(3)</sup>

(1) Minnesota Office of Justice Programs. (2010) Human Trafficking in Minnesota

(2) Pierce, A. (2009). Shattered Hearts: The Commercial Sexual Exploitation of American Indian Women and Girls in Minnesota

(3) Ryan, Lauren-Safe Harbor/No Wrong Door Director for the State of Minnesota (2014)

# Your role in supporting sexually exploited youth.....

- Recognize the warning signs
- Ensure physical and psychological safety, which includes providing safe housing for these youth
- Ask the child/youth and/or parents about sexual exploitation
- Ensure trauma-informed services are provided from a victim-centered perspective
- Connection with Regional Navigator to assist in planning for these youth

# Your role in supporting sexually exploited youth.....

- Consideration should be given to harm reduction strategies for these youth
- Expect relapses and plan for them with effective safety plans
- The “rescue” mentality may actually produce additional trauma for this population
- Children and youth who run away are particularly vulnerable to sex trafficking

# Your role in supporting sexually exploited run away youth.....

- Immediate notification to agencies including law enforcement
- Search regularly for the youth at places where he or she frequents
- Contact individuals who the youth may contact while on the run to help encourage them to return to care/home
- Determine factors associated with youth running from care/home
- Safety planning when runaway concerns exist

# PSYCHOTROPIC MEDICATIONS

## Trauma & Child Welfare: What You Can Do

# What is it

## Psychotropic Medication Use with Children in Foster Care

- Federal requirement for states to have plan in place for psychiatric medication oversight
- MN State Oversight Team
- MN Psychiatric Consultation Service



# Why is this important?

- High rates of “off-label” use
- Prescription rates much higher in foster care population
- Psychotropic Medications being utilized as the first course of treatment

# Childhood trauma & other diagnoses

- Common diagnoses for children in the CW system include:
  - Reactive Attachment Disorder
  - Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder
  - Oppositional Defiant Disorder
  - Bipolar Disorder
  - Conduct Disorder
- These diagnoses generally do not capture the full extent of the developmental impact of trauma.

# Trauma & psychotropic medication among children in CW

## 3 reasons to use medications:

1. Provide symptom relief for psychiatric conditions that have medication targets
2. Improve functioning by relieving symptoms
3. Reduce high-risk symptoms (e.g., suicidality, psychosis)



# Children on Psychotropic Medications: Questions to consider

- Judges
- GAL
- Attorneys
- Case workers



# TIME FOR A BREAK

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# RECOGNIZING TRAUMA: ADULTS

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Trauma & Child Welfare: What You  
Can Do

# What is it

- Many birth parents who are involved in the child welfare system have their own histories of trauma.
- Parents whose children have experienced trauma often experience secondary traumatic stress reactions.

# Why is it important

- Compromised ability to make appropriate judgments for their own and their child's safety
- Difficulty in forming and maintaining secure and trusting relationships
- Impair parents capacity to regulate their emotions
- Impairs self-esteem

# Why is it important

- Lead to maladaptive coping strategies including substance abuse
- Result in trauma triggers - parents may have extreme reactions to situations that seem benign to others
- Impair a parents decision-making ability
- May appear uncooperative, resistant

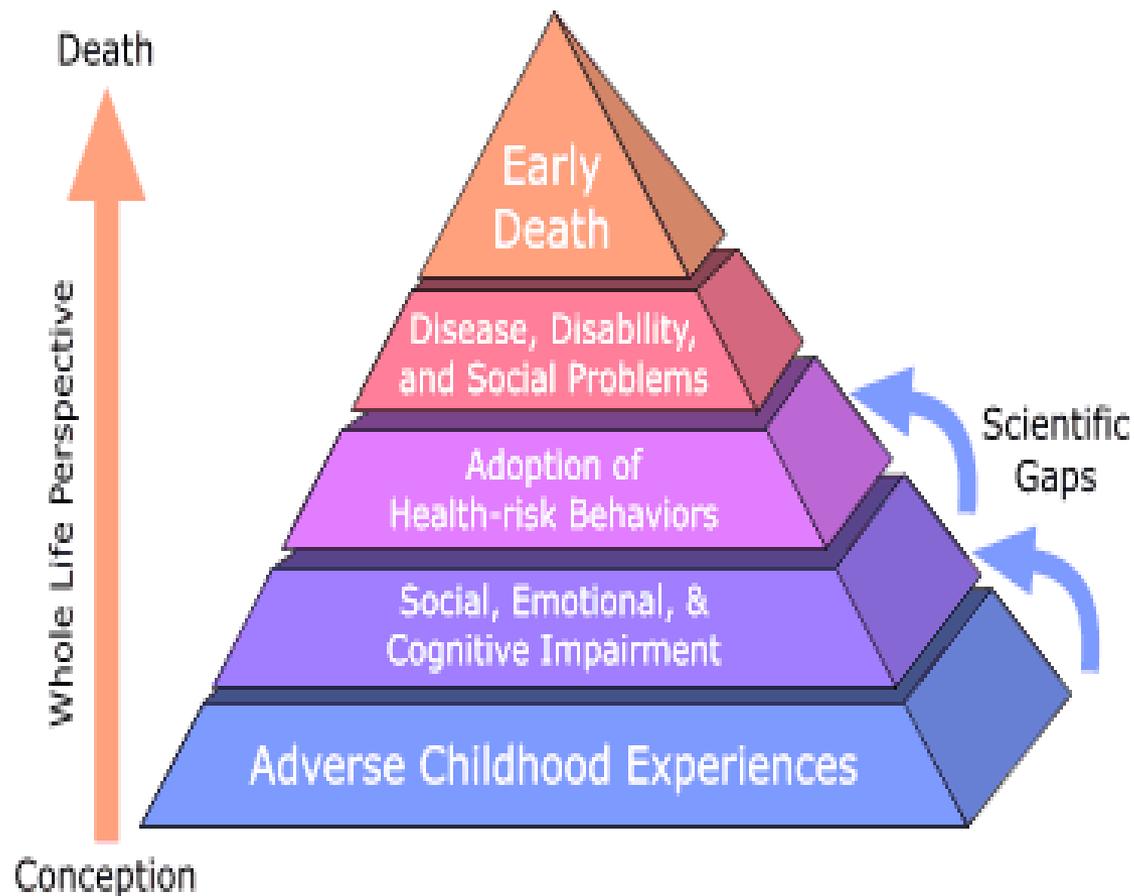


# Practical examples:

- Parents may not show up to visits with their children because they are avoiding potential triggers.
- Parents might “blow up” when a case worker informs them of a seemingly minor change to the case plan.
- Parents may also make poor relationship choices that interfere with their progress towards reunification.

# Long-term trauma impact

## Ace pyramid: CDC



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation/divorce
- Incarcerated household member

Source: Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., ... Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14, 245-258.

# Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse and neglect (e.g., psychological, physical, sexual)

Household dysfunction (e.g., domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness)



# Impact on Child Development

Neurobiological effects (e.g., brain abnormalities, stress hormone dysregulation)

Psychological effects (e.g., poor attachment, poor socialization, poor self-efficacy)

Health risk behaviors (e.g., smoking, obesity, substance abuse, promiscuity)



# Long-Term Consequences

## Disease and Disability

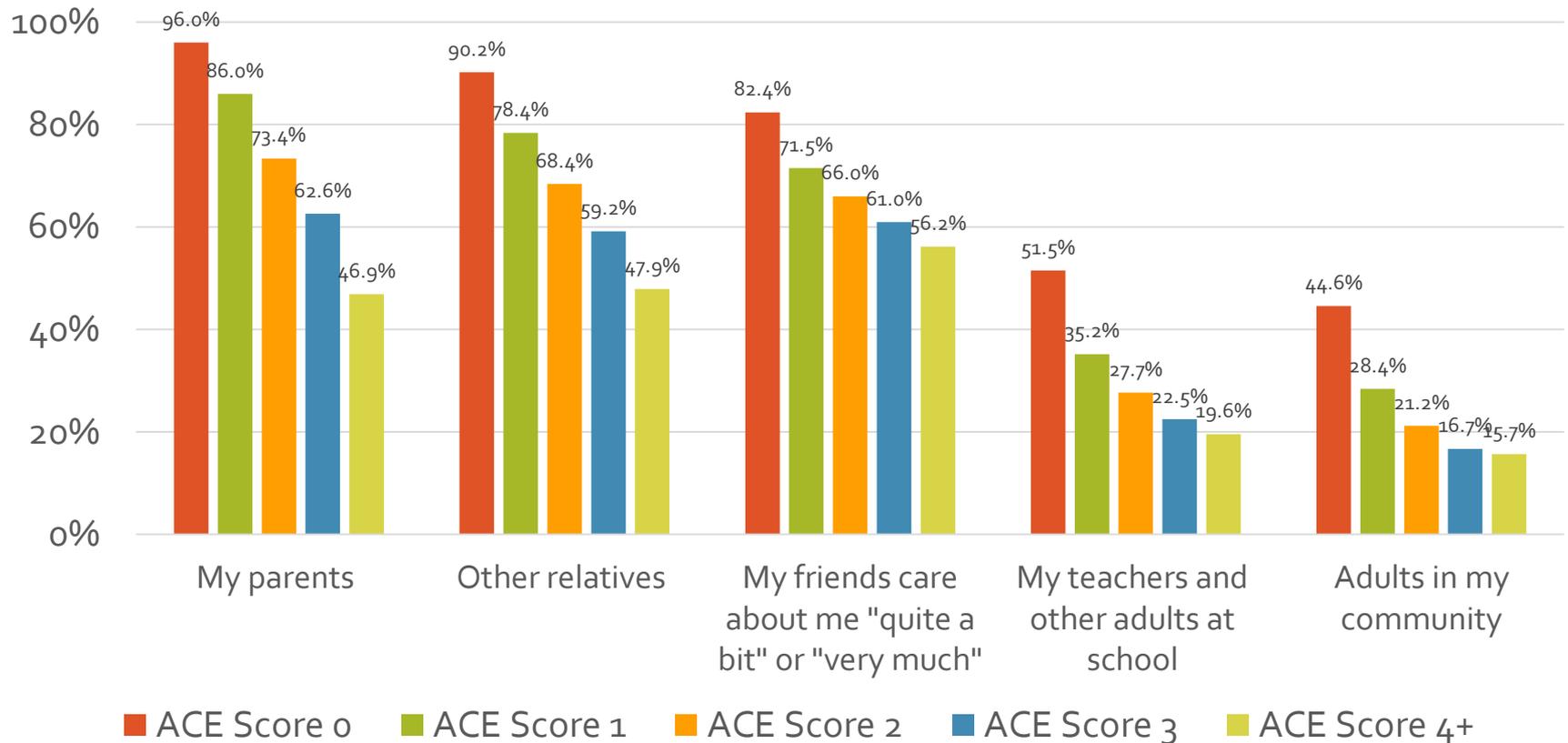
Major depression, suicide, PTSD \* Drug and alcohol abuse \* Heart disease \* Cancer \* Chronic lung disease \* STDs \* Intergenerational transmission of abuse

## Social Problems

Homelessness \* Prostitution \* Criminal behavior \* Unemployment \* Parenting problems \* Family violence \* High utilization of health and social services

# ACE: MN Student Survey

Minnesota 8th, 9th, and 11th Graders Reporting Others Care About Them "Quite a Bit" or "Very Much", by ACE Score, 2013  
MSS



# Parent's need

- Stability
- Structure
- Relationships (they can depend on)



# Your role in recognizing trauma in adults...

- Trauma and current behaviors
- Previous interventions
- Recognizing unusual behaviors
- Decrease anxiety
- Build trust
- Enhance participation

**Change happens  
through  
relationships, not  
compliance.**



# INFLUENCE OF CULTURE

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What You Can Do

# What is it

Culture is a system of shared actions, values, beliefs, and traditions that guide the behavior of families and communities. Culture may refer to racial, ethnic, religious, or social identity. In recognition of the importance and strength of cultural norms, have ongoing discussions with the family about how culture influences their family in each of the domains.

# Why is it important

- Our own backgrounds can influence our perceptions.
- Assessment of a child's trauma history should always take into account the cultural background.
- We must understand how trauma is expressed and resiliency fostered within that culture.
- Children's', families' and communities' responses to trauma vary by group.
- People of different backgrounds may define "trauma" in different ways.

# Cultural Trauma

- Refers to a dramatic loss of identity and meaning, affecting a group of people that has achieved some degree of cohesion

# Historical trauma

- Cumulative exposure to traumatic events that not only affects an individual but continues to affect subsequent generations.
- The trauma is psychological injury held personally and transmitted over generations.

# Historical trauma and loss

Historical losses include:

- Loss of land
- Loss of language
- Loss of culture and traditional spiritual ways
- Loss of family ties

Emotional responses to losses include:

- Sadness, depression
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Shame
- Fear, distrust

Source: Whitbeck, L. B., Adams, G. W., Hoyt, D. R., & Chen, X. (2004). Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people. *American Journal of Psychology*, 33(3/4), 119-130.

# Minnesota Statistics (2012) - African American children compared to White children

American/Black children are:

- More than 3 times likely to be reported as abused or neglected
- 4.4 times more likely to experience out-of-home care
- 3.1 times more likely to enter guardianship than a White child

# Minnesota Statistics (2012) - American Indian children compared to White children

American Indian children are:

- More than 6 times likely to be reported as abused or neglected
- 14.3 times more likely to experience out-of-home care
- 4.6 times more likely to enter guardianship than a White child

# What you can do

- Seek information about different cultural and refugee populations
- Recognize that strong cultural identity can also contribute to the resilience of children, their families, and their communities.
- Assess for historical trauma: ask about traumas and losses experienced by family members and ancestors and their impact on the child and family.
- Ensure that referrals are culturally and linguistically responsive.

# INTRODUCTION TO THE SEVEN ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

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Trauma & Child Welfare: What  
You Can Do

# Seven Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System:

1. Maximize physical and psychological safety for the child and family.
2. Identify trauma-related needs of children and families.
3. Enhancing child well-being and resiliency.

# Seven Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System:

4. Enhancing family well-being and resiliency.
5. Enhancing the well-being and resiliency of those working in the system.
6. Partnering with youth and families.
7. Partnering with child-serving agencies and systems.

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 1

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #1

Maximize physical & psychological safety for the child & family

**SAFETY  
IS EVERYBODY'S  
RESPONSIBILITY!**

# Why is it important

- Safety is one of the priorities of the child welfare system – but for a child and family who have experienced trauma, they may still feel unsafe even when they are no longer in a dangerous situation.
- Given this, in addition to ensuring physical safety, it is important to help children and families feel psychologically safe.

# Your role in promoting physical and psychological safety...

- Understand the difference
- Ensure both physical and psychological safety
- Communication
- Legal Processes
- Court Environment

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 2

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element # 2

Identify trauma-related needs of children and families

# Why is it important

- One of the first steps in helping trauma-exposed children and families is to understand how they have been impacted by trauma.
- Trauma-related needs can be identified through trauma screening and assessment.
- It is important to consider trauma when making service referrals and service plans.

# What's the Difference?

## Psychological Evaluation

Designed to answer a specific referral question.

## Diagnostic Assessment

A comprehensive process conducted by a MH professional that is used to determine whether a child has a MH disorder that needs to be treated

## Trauma Assessment

A more in-depth exploration of the nature & severity of the traumatic event, the impact of those events, current trauma-related symptoms and functional impairment.

## Trauma Screening

A brief focused inquiry to determine whether an individual has experienced specific traumatic events or reactions to trauma.

# Minnesota Trauma Screening

- Federal guidance
- Working on integration into Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools

# Diagnostic Assessment

- Conducted by a mental health professional
- May occur over several sessions
- Drives the treatment planning process
- Includes specific recommendations for treatment
- Should include a trauma assessment

# Examples of evidence-based treatments

- Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT)
- Child-Parent Psychotherapy (CPP)
- Parent-Child Interaction Training (PCIT)

There are many different evidence-based trauma-focused treatments. A trauma-informed mental health professional should be able to determine which treatment is most appropriate for the child.

# Trauma Screening for Parents

- Awareness of parental trauma history helps workers better understand parents and link them to appropriate services.

# Your role in identifying trauma-related needs of children and families...

- Thorough screening and assessment of needs
- Knowing and understanding resources
- Communication
- Legal Processes
- Court Environment

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 3

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #3

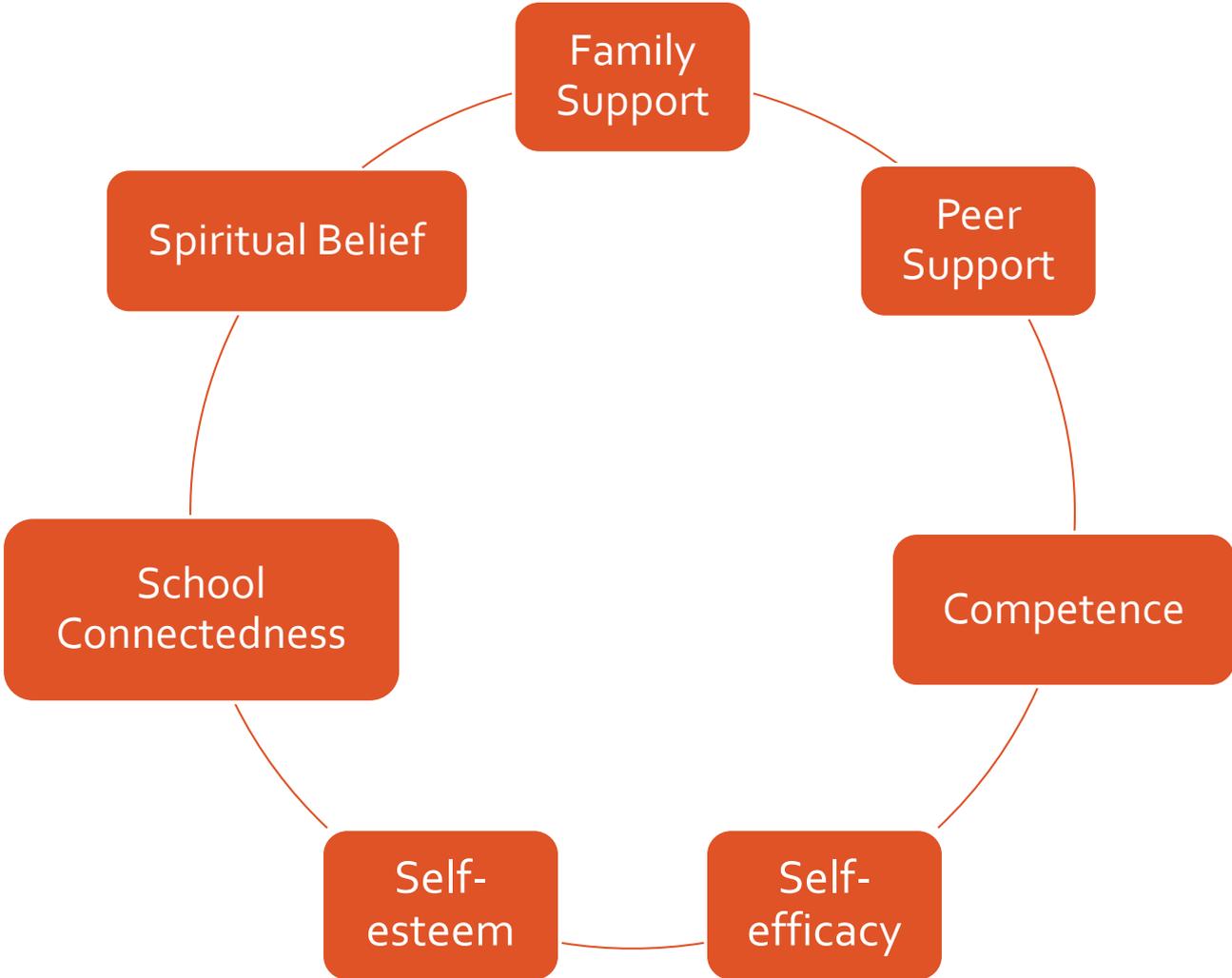
Enhancing child well-being and resilience



# Why is it important

- Resilience is defined as the ability to succeed or thrive in the face of high levels of risk or adversity.
- Development of resilience in individuals occurs throughout the life course.
- It is important for the child welfare system to recognize and build on children's existing strengths.

# Child Well-being and Resilience



# Invisible Suitcase



# Your role in enhancing child well-being and resilience...

- Build upon child's strengths and natural supports
- Assist caregivers in developing strategies to re-pack their child's invisible suitcase
- Understand and utilize individual, relational, and community factors that increase child well-being and resiliency

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 4

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #4

Enhancing family well-being & resilience

# Why is it important

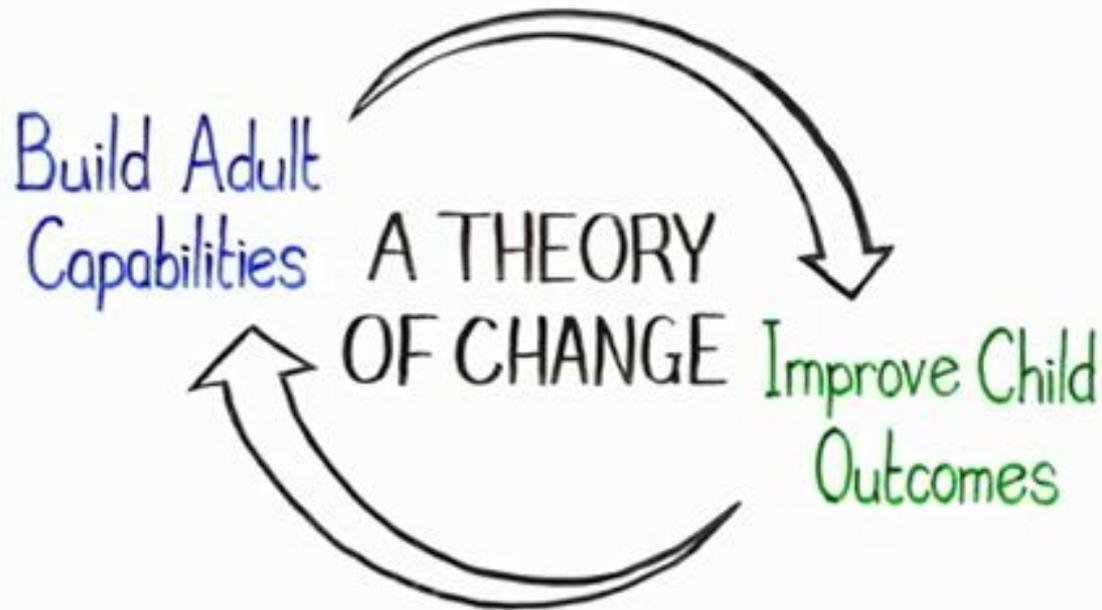
- Families are a critical part of both protecting children from harm and enhancing their natural resilience



# Family Protective Factors:

- Nurturing and attachment
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Parental resilience
- Social connections
- Concrete supports for parents

# Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes



# Your role in enhancing family well-being and resilience...

- Build on natural resiliency, including culture
- Recognize caregiver(s) trauma, identify how this impacts the family system, and refer for necessary treatment if needed
- Enhance and build upon the family's support network
- Allow families to tell their story

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 5

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What You Can Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #5

Enhancing the well-being & resilience of those working in the system



# STS Signs & Symptoms

- Avoidance (including of certain clients)
- Preoccupation with clients/client stories
- Intrusive thoughts/nightmares/flashbacks
- Arousal symptoms
- Thoughts of violence/revenge

# STS Signs & Symptoms

- Feeling estranged/isolated/no one to talk to
- Feeling trapped, “infected” by trauma, hopeless, inadequate, depressed
- Difficulty separating work from personal life

# Your role in enhancing the well-being and resilience of those working in the system...

- Be aware
- Have a self-care plan
- Communication
- Legal Processes
- Court Environment

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 6

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #6

### Youth and Family Partnership



# Why is it important

“The best strategy to improve family involvement and partnership is for the courts to take the time to ask them for guidance and solutions.”

(Buffington, Dierkhising, Marsh, 2010)

# Your role in promoting youth and family partnership....

- Provide training opportunities for youth and families
- Involve youth and families in delivering trainings
- Create and use incentives
- Provide recognition and celebrate successes

# ESSENTIAL ELEMENT 7

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## Trauma & Child Welfare: What Can You Do

# What is it

## Essential Element #7

Partnering with child-serving agencies & systems

# Why is it important

- Trauma can impact many aspects of children's and families' lives - it is important for child welfare to partner with other service systems in identifying and addressing trauma.

**T E A M W O R K**

# Your role in partnering with child-serving agencies & systems.....

- Form strong partnerships
- Cross training to speak the same language across systems
- Ensure ongoing communication and collaboration
- MDT and FGDM
- Cross system assessment tools
- Shared outcomes
- Develop protocols and frameworks jointly

# YOUR ROLE MATTERS!

Thank You!

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