

## A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE APPROACH

### QRTP Infosheet: Issue Four

A Culturally Responsive Trauma-Informed Approach refers to the capacity for professionals and care givers to provide care to children, youth, and families' that acknowledges, respects, and integrates their cultural values, beliefs, and practices.

#### **What is Culture:**

Culture is a system developed by a community or society that gives order to the way people see the world. Culture is a concept that involves a particular set of beliefs, norms, and values that influence how people view relationships, live their lives, and organize their word. Within a nation, race, or community, people belong to multiple cultural groups and negotiate multiple cultural expectations daily. These expectations, or cultural norms, are the spoken or unspoken rules or standards for a given group that indicate whether a certain social event or behavior is appropriate or inappropriate. The word "culture" is sometimes applied to groups formed based on age, socioeconomic status, disability, sexual orientation, recovery status, common interest, or proximity.<sup>1</sup> "Culture" extends beyond the identification of a child, youth, and families' race and ethnicity to include other variables such as faith/religion, sexual orientation, region of residence, and level of acculturation, and closely related factors such as socioeconomic status and literacy levels.

#### **Basic Assumptions:**

Gaining an understanding about culture and trauma, like any important skill, is an ongoing process that is never completed; such skills cannot be taught in any single book or training session. Nevertheless, organizations can examine and broaden their cultural awareness, embrace diversity, and develop a heightened respect for people of all cultural groups.

Organizations that value diversity and reflect cross cultural inclusion are more likely to be successful in the ever-changing landscape of individual child, youth, and family needs, communities, and treatment services. An understanding of race, ethnicity, and culture (including one's own) is necessary to appreciate the diversity of human dynamics and to treat all children, youth, and families effectively.

Consideration of culture is important at all levels of operation. Being culturally responsive means including racially and ethnically diverse groups and underserved populations in all stages of the process, from the development and implementation of practices to program structure and design, to treatment strategies, and approaches to staff professional development. A child, youth, or family can feel a greater sense of safety after receiving culturally responsive services, supporting the belief that culture is essential to healing.

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<sup>1</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Improving Cultural Competence. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series No. 59. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4849. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.

## Culturally Responsive Principles<sup>2</sup>

- Recognize the role of help-seeking behaviors, traditions, and natural support networks.
  - Culture includes traditions that dictate who, or which groups, to seek in times of need; how to handle suffering and loss; and how healing takes place. These customs and traditions are respected by a culturally responsive program.
- Establish relationships based on mutual trust and respect.
  - Be intentional about practices that embrace shared learning and uplift cultural wellness and wisdom.
  - Be prepared to challenge your beliefs. Foster open dialogue. Create mechanisms that provide internal/external feedback and opportunities for evaluating the effectiveness of your program.
- Understand the communities served (socio-cultural and sociopolitical histories, as well as current context, intersections of oppression, trauma, etc.) and centralize this cultural understanding in your work.
  - Provide ongoing opportunities for collaboration among children, youth, families, staff, volunteers, and board members of your organization.
- Understand the origins of trauma including historical, collective, and the inter-generational transmission of trauma. Maximize the resiliency, wisdom, and strength of survivors. They have much to teach on how to heal from trauma.
  - Learn the common elements of oppression, prejudice, and discrimination and how they intersect in the lives of survivors from different cultures.
- Keep the realities of the survivors and their children central to your work, regardless of the specific work that you do.
  - Value the diversity present within the community (i.e., culturally specific communities, persons with disabilities, immigrants, LGBTQI survivors, etc.).
  - Prioritize individual wisdom, values, expertise, and experience.
- Your organization can work with community partners to end discrimination, injustice, or intolerance. Believe in the power and collective wisdom of communities.
  - Involve participants (including youth) in updating existing programming in addition to developing new topics, activities, research studies, advocacy, community education, and evaluation strategies.
  - Create and maintain strong networks with other agencies, organizations, and systems you can collaborate with to enhance the work for social change and justice.

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<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Trauma Informed Principles through a Culturally Specific Lens; *Josie Serrata, PhD & Heidi Notario, M.A.; Contributions from Virginia Perez Ortega; and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Improving Cultural Competence. Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series No. 59. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4849. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.*

## Resources

### US Department of Health and Human Services

[Think Cultural Health](#) is a website and repository which features information, continuing education opportunities, resources and more for health, health care and other professionals to learn about culturally and linguistically appropriate services or CLAS, launched in 2004. Think Cultural Health is sponsored by the Office of Minority Health. [The National CLAS Standards](#) are a set of 15 action steps intended to advance health equity and eliminate disparities by providing a blueprint to implement culturally and linguistically appropriate services.

### Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

[TIP 59 Improving Cultural Competence](#): This guide helps professional care providers and administrators understand the role of culture in the delivery of trauma, mental health and substance use services. It describes cultural competence and discusses racial, ethnic, and cultural considerations

### National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)

[NCTSN provides resources on culturally responsive trauma-informed approaches.](#) Trauma intersects in many ways with culture, history, race, gender, location, and language. Trauma-informed systems acknowledge the compounding impact of structural inequity and are responsive to the unique needs of diverse communities. Cultural awareness, responsiveness, and understanding are essential to increasing access and improving the standard of care for traumatized children, families, and communities across the United States.

### Center for Healthcare Strategies (CHCS)

CHCS works to improve health outcomes for the millions of people in the U.S. who face serious barriers to well-being, like poverty, complex health and social needs, and [systemic racism](#). For more than 25 years, they have collaborated with Medicaid and related health and human services agencies in states across the country to shape how health care services are designed, financed, and delivered. This experience — both on the ground and in partnership across sectors and regions — gives them a unique vantage point on opportunities to strengthen and align systems so that more people can access quality care and be as healthy as possible.

### The Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress (CPTS)

CPTS was founded in 2002 to address medical trauma in the lives of children and families. CPTS provides guidance to implementing [culturally-sensitive trauma-informed care](#) for health care professionals. CPTS is headquartered at two of the premier children's hospitals in the country: The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and Nemours Children's Health. CPTS is a partner in the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), funded as a Translation and Adaptation (Category II) Center.