

OCYF TRAUMA TEAM NEWSLETTER

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HAVE A TRAUMA-INFORMED HOLIDAY SEASON

Although the holidays are traditionally a time of happiness, for children who have trauma histories, they may prove challenging because:

- * Children may be spending time in placement, away from their family of origin.
- * Their parents/loved ones may be incarcerated or be offered limited visitation.
- * Large gatherings of adults may be a trigger for children who have suffered abuse or neglect.
- * The best of intentions will not soothe the loss of their family during the holidays. Even if a child has been in placement for years, loss is felt.
- * Trauma symptoms may include difficulty with moods, intrusive memories and thoughts, as well as hyper-arousal. Being expected to act normally in a family setting while trying to manage trauma symptoms can be very difficult.
- * Putting holiday pressure and expectations on someone you are trying to support is unhelpful.
- * Even those who haven't experienced past trauma may find holidays stressful. Be sensitive to everyone's individual experiences.

How to support children who experienced trauma:

- * Reassure them that they are having a normal reaction to an abnormal situation.
- * Showing and telling them they have support if they want it, will help to make a child feel safe.
- * Sometimes just listening is enough.
- * Follow their lead and listen to their needs.
- * Engage in self-care so that you are able to better support the child.
- * Give the child a pass for choosing not to engage in activities that may be triggering.
- * Allow for down time. Running around to every store or visiting every family member in a day may not be appropriate. Give many breaks and time to process feelings in between interactions and events.
- * Let go of the expectation of portraying a "movie style" holiday family. It creates tremendous stress for adults and it can cause unbearable stress for children, particularly if they have unresolved trauma. If no one likes turkey, eat pizza.

TEAM UPDATE

The OCYF Trauma Team would also like to remind agencies of the free online training, Raising Trauma Awareness in Child Welfare Casework Practice in PA, that is now available through the [E-Learn Catalog ID # 2348](#). CCYAs will also be able to take advantage of Lakeside Global Trainings. More information on these trainings has been shared via email.

