



OCYF Trauma Team

A trauma-informed child welfare agency understands the importance of investing in the health, well-being, and resilience of its workforce. Recognizing that child welfare professionals and resource parents often face secondary traumatic stress (STS), agencies should provide STS training and coaching. If left unaddressed, STS—also known as vicarious trauma or compassion fatigue—can result in decreased productivity, higher absenteeism, and increased turnover rates. ([The Importance of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System \(cwig-prod-prod-drupal-s3fs-us-east-1.s3.amazonaws.com\)](https://www.amazonaws.com))

October Activity: Answer – 10 pumpkins

November Activity Suggestion: Place a ring of tape, sticky side away from the skin on your (and your kiddos) wrist, as you hike and come across items in the park that remind you of fall (leaves, fall flowers, acorns, etc.) stick them to your tape until you have a full fall bracelet.

Trauma-Informed Workforce Development

Building a trauma-informed workforce is crucial for establishing an effective trauma-informed system. Integrating a trauma perspective into the organization’s daily operations ensures that all staff members—receptionists, caseworkers, supervisors, managers, administrators, and other program staff—view this approach as fundamental to their roles. This also extends to providing training for foster and adoptive parents. Paradigm shifts may be necessary in the following areas:

Perspective. Traumatic stress is frequently mistaken for behavioral problems by foster parents, child welfare workers, and other professionals. Using a trauma-informed approach means recognizing that an individual’s trauma may be the cause of their behavioral or emotional issues.

Goals. Child welfare services typically prioritize confirming cases of abuse or neglect and ensuring a child’s physical safety. However, trauma-informed care goes further by aiming to help children heal from trauma, enhance their social and emotional well-being, and prevent further trauma.

Collaboration. When child welfare agencies effectively collaborate with other service systems through enhanced communication, shared goals, data sharing, and strategic funding, they can significantly improve well-being and increase access to services for the families they serve.

Focus on early intervention. A trauma-informed child welfare system recognizes that dedicating more resources to identifying trauma and providing early intervention services can help prevent or lessen long-term effects.

Approach with Families. It’s crucial to clearly communicate to families the distinction between their mandatory involvement in the child welfare system (due to confirmed maltreatment) and their voluntary participation in services aimed at healing from trauma.

Awareness of intergenerational trauma. It’s also important to recognize that caregivers’ challenging behaviors, like those of their children, can often be seen as maladaptive responses to their own trauma.

Role of child welfare professionals. While using a trauma-informed approach, the professional’s role changes. Staff may dedicate more time to trauma screening, and ensuring progress towards mental health treatment goals, including monitoring psychotropic medication use.

Awareness of STS. Being trauma-informed includes recognizing and addressing the effects of trauma on everyone involved in the system, including caregivers and service providers.

[The Importance of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System](https://www.amazonaws.com)

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES: OCYF continues to offer free trauma trainings facilitated through Lakeside Global for the Pennsylvania child welfare community at the following links: Workshops: <https://register.lakesidetraining.org/pa-ocyf-workshops-2025/> and Intensive courses: <https://register.lakesidetraining.org/pa-ocyf-intensive-courses-2025/>. Additionally the *Developing Trauma Sensitivity for Congregate Care Staff* course has been released through the E-LEARN system at https://www.e-learn.pitt.edu/visitor_catalog_class/show/1557287 This is offered free to all PA licensed child welfare providers.