

# OCYF Trauma Tip Sheet

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[OCYF Trauma-Informed Care \(TIC\) | Department of Human Services | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](#)

Adapted from [A-Trauma-Informed-Approach-to-Workforce.pdf](#)

## What Does Trauma Have to Do with The Workplace?

Each day, employees experience various worries related to their workplace. Younger employees may be concerned with starting a career and establishing financial stability, mid-career employees could be concerned about career advancement or workplace benefits as their needs change, and senior employees may worry about maintaining career status or retirement.

Some employees may face overwhelming external challenges that impact their work behavior. Physical or mental pressures such as childhood trauma, domestic violence, homelessness, emotional abuse, the loss of a loved one, or destabilizing issues can affect their self-perception and work performance. At times the workplace may become the trauma reminder, or the source of toxic stress, causing employees to disengage.

## What Does It Mean to Be “Trauma-Informed”?

To be "trauma-informed" means adopting a framework that acknowledges the widespread impact of trauma and understands paths for recovery. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) outlines this

1. Realize the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery.
2. Recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system.
3. Respond by integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
4. Resist re-traumatization by avoiding activating trauma responses and promoting a safe environment.

### BREAKING THE CYCLE — TODAY AND TOMORROW

People are products of their environments.



Changing the experience at work...  
(providing financial security, health benefits, dignity and respect, and flexibility helps your employees be productive while managing effects of what happened long ago.)



...changes the experience at home.  
(so workers and their families live in a positive and enriching environment.)

**PREPARING TOMORROW'S WORKFORCE STARTS TODAY!**

Identifying toxic stress and trauma in the workplace isn't straightforward. Many employees fear being ridiculed or fired for acknowledging personal struggles, especially those related to mental health. This reluctance often means these issues go unaddressed. However, increased research and media coverage over the years have raised awareness about the harmful effects of toxic stress and trauma. Stress can cause neurological changes that lead to physical health problems like high blood pressure, sleeplessness, depression, colitis, heart disease, and ulcers.

Despite these challenges, organizations can prioritize addressing the impact of trauma on their employees. Beyond just caring about employees' well-being, toxic stress and trauma can affect absenteeism, productivity, and safety.

Workforce professionals can support the creation of trauma-informed workplaces. In the workplace, trauma manifests through changes in work behaviors, physical health, and impaired thinking. If the workplace itself is the source of trauma, leadership within the organization can consult with and advise one another on organizational culture, job quality and design, supervisor or management behaviors, team dynamics, and employee health and safety programs. Focusing on job quality, organizational structure, workplace communications, and norms is a good place to start. It's best to start small, as organizational change can be stressful for employees, and transformational changes, like culture change, often faces the most resistance.