# Trauma-Informed Community Engagement

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Denver Public Library honors and acknowledges that the land on which we reside is the traditional territory of the Ute, Cheyenne, and Arapaho Peoples. We also recognize the 48 contemporary tribal nations that are historically tied to the lands that make up the state of Colorado.



## Today we'll answer:

- → What is trauma?
- → Why should we care about trauma?
- → What is a trauma-informed approach?
- → What is a trauma-informed library?
- What is trauma-informed community engagement and what does it look like in practice?
- → How are we impacted by doing trauma-informed community engagement?
- → What are tips for taking care?

## **Mushu Break**





# **My Positionality**

## What is trauma?

Trauma, as defined by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being."



# **Different Types of Trauma**

#### **Acute Trauma**

• A single instance or fearing for one's safety,

#### **Chronic Trauma**

• An ongoing perceived threat to one's safety

#### **Complex Trauma**

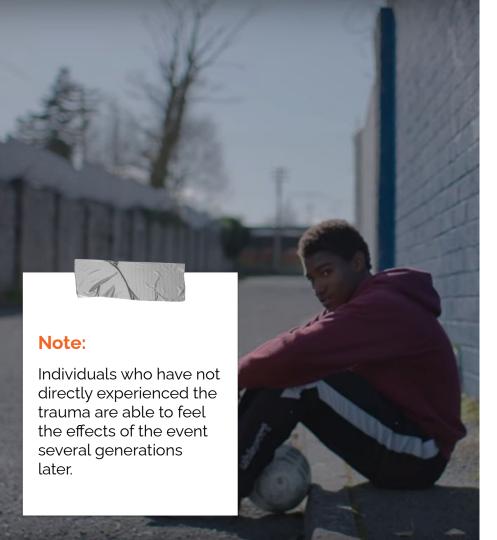
• Complex trauma occurs when there is some combination of the two types above.

#### **Historic Trauma**

• Historic trauma is multigenerational and is experienced by demographics, groups, and families who have been impoverished, displaced, or otherwise oppressed over long periods of time

#### Intergenerational or Transgenerational Trauma

• Emerging research suggests that individuals may pass down the effects of trauma to their descendants.



# More About Historic Trauma

Historical trauma refers to the collective and cumulative emotional wounding across generations that results from cataclysmic events targeting a community. That trauma is held both personally and collectively and is transmitted across generations.

Yellowhorse Braveheart
Wakiksuyapi: Carrying the Historical Trauma of the Lakota

# HIGHLY SEGREGATED.

IN 1901, RICHMOND, VIRGINIA,
REFUSED CARNEGIE FUNDING
FOR FEAR THAT BLACK CITIZENS
WOULD BE ALLOWED ACCESS.

IN 1902, WHEN THE WHITES-ONLY ATLANTA CARNEGIE LIBRARY OPENED, W.E.B. DU BOIS NOTED IT WAS A-PUBLIC INSTITUTION THAT DIDN'T SERVE A FULL THIRD OF THE CITY'S POPULATION.

AND SO,

BLACK COMMUNITY LEADERS

BEGAN ADVOCATING FOR

SEPARATE CARNEGIE FUNDING FOR BLACK PUBLIC LIBRARY BRANCHES, OFTEN GOVERNED BY BLACK BOARDS, STAFFED BY BLACK LIBRARIANS, SERVING BLACK READERS. Ariel Aberg-Riger's illustrated

<u>A History of the American Public</u>

<u>Library</u> from Bloomberg

CityLab

### A word from John Lewis

"I remember in 1956 when I was 16 years old, with some of my brothers and sisters and cousins, going down to the public library trying to get library cards and we were told that libraries were for whites only and not for coloreds."



# Why do I need to know about trauma?

- Many people who are in need of or are seeking support and services have experienced trauma in their lives.
- When we avoid, overlook, or misunderstand trauma we can often be retraumatizing and interfere with the healing process.
- Trauma can reduce community capacity to collectively identify and address its problems and plan for its future.



Community engagement is building relationships between staff and the surrounding community to remove the barriers that prevent individuals from taking ownership of their library and its resources.



#### Note

It means building programs and services with the community not for them

"Community trauma" affects social groups or neighborhoods long subjected to interpersonal violence, structural violence, and historical harms. In some communities, the legacy of forced displacement, historic disinvestment, and inconsistent

**services** has created a pervasive and deep sense of distrust of new programs, staff,and city-led initiatives while community violence has led to high levels of stress and isolation.



Elsa Falkenburger, Olivia Arena, and Jessica Wolin
Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement

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"Trauma informed care is an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives."

# Trauma Informed Public Libraries

- Recognize the power the library has as a historical institution, a public service agency and an entity with resources as well as the ways in which it has used and abused that power.
- Recognize the necessity of sharing power with the community.
- Pose the question: "How does the library share its power equitably, effectively, and intentionally?"
- Shift from "What's wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you and what do you need?

## The 4 R's of Trauma-informed Care

Realizes

the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.

Recognizes

the signs and symptoms of trauma in patrons, families, staff, and others involved with the library.

Responds

responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.

Resists retraumatization

of community members, patrons, and staff

Karina Hagelin

Moving Towards Healing: A Trauma-Informed Librarianship Primer

#### **SAMHSA'S 6 PRINCIPLES**





#### SAFETY

Prevents violence across the lifespan and creates safe physical environments.



#### **TRUSTWORTHINESS**

Fosters positive relationships among residents, City Hall, police, schools and others.

#### **EMPOWERMENT**

Ensures opportunities for growth are available for all.

#### COLLABORATION

Promotes involvement of residents and partnership among agencies.

#### PEER SUPPORT

Engages residents to work together on issues of common concern.

#### HISTORY, GENDER, CULTURE

Values and supports history, culture and diversity.



# Applying the 6 Principles to Public Libraries

Safety	Diverse staff and the many people the library serves feel both physically and psychologically safe.	÷	Clearly marked entrance and exit signs in case of an emergency Rethinking our relationship with the police Offering staff training on topics like implicit bias, trauma stewardship, mental health first aid
Trustworthiness and Transparency	Decisions are conducted with transparency with the goal of both building & maintaining trust with patrons and among staff	:	Patrons know & trust personal info to be confidentially kept Library rules and policies are clearly communicated and equitably enforced. Transparent decision-making processes at all levels
Empowerment, Voice and Choice	Throughout the library and among the patrons served, individuals' strengths and experiences are recognized and built upon.	:	Diverse reader's advisory and reference interactions Programming decisions that are led by what our communities want and need Creating clear signage, displays, and discovery tools
Collaboration and Mutuality	Promoting collaboration and leveling power differences between staff and patrons and among organizational staff.	<b>:</b>	Creating space for cross organizational collaboration Creating avenues for both staff & patrons to share feedback Partnering with local community organizations to create community-relevant and culturally-responsive offerings
Peer Support	Emphasizing peer support & mutual self-help as vehicles for establishing safety, building trust, enhancing collaboration	÷	Prioritizing #ownvoices titles in displays and on booklists Clearly communicating guidelines for sharing concerns Creating opportunities for community members to gather, shared experiences, build relationships, and access support
History, gender, culture	Recognizing & addressing historical trauma & incorporating policies, protocols & processes that are culturally responsive.	÷	Having gender-inclusive bathrooms available with clear signage Applying Universal Design principles with an intersectional lens Consulting (and compensating) and/or partnering with culturally-specific organizations

Karina Hagelin

" A trauma-informed approach to our work realizes every choice we make, every interaction we have, every policy we create ... they all have the potential to be retraumatizing or healing for our patrons and each other."



#### Note:

We must be intentional about creating cultural shifts in our work and our libraries to choose healing.

The Trauma Informed Community Building (TICB) model, developed by BRIDGE Housing Corporation and Health Equity Institute is an alternative to traditional community-building models directly respond to the needs of community members traumatized by violence, generational poverty and racism

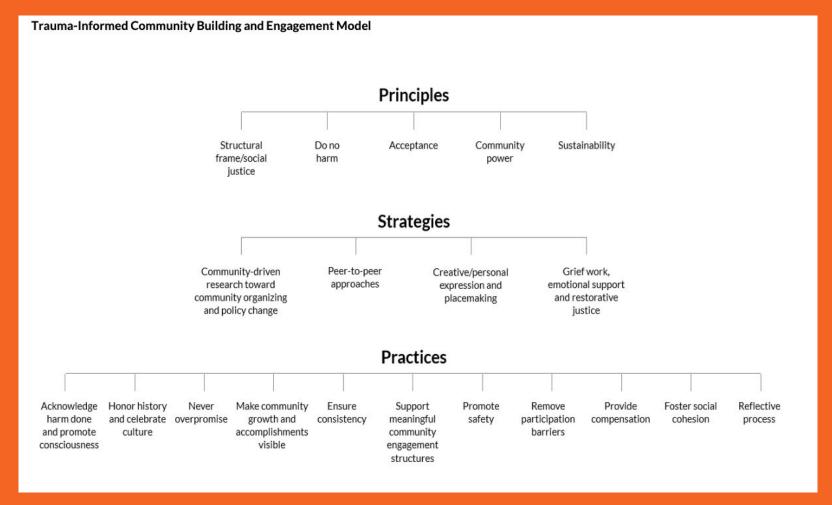


#### Note

Available evidence from early implementation of the Trauma Informed Community Building model in Potrero Hill, San Francisco suggests these initiatives may improve mental health and increase physical activity, increase connections among individuals from different cultures and generations, and increase feelings of safety among participants

# Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement Model

- The goal of this model is a community with a strong social fabric, positive health outcomes, meaningful community leadership and vibrant community institutions.
- Aims to achieve this goal by acknowledging and addressing poverty and systemic racism, including opportunities for creative expression, recognizing the history of place and residents, implementing resident-driven programs, and emphasizing the sustainability and consistency of programming.
- Emphasizes thinking critically about how work with communities intersects with the systems and institutions that affect community health and well-being.



# **Principles**

#### Structural Frame/Social Justice

 Shine light on structural challenges in order to shift the blame off individuals

#### Do no harm

 Do no harm by recognizing past and current trauma and avoid retraumatizing individuals and the community.

#### Acceptance

 Meet residents where they are, accepting the realities of community conditions.

# Community Power

•Including community members and ensuring equitable participation promote a sense of hope and control.

#### Sustainability

•Beyond financial resources, it is important to invest in community infrastructure, social capital, and the residents, as this is who and what remains after shortterm funding sources are gone.

Adapted from Elsa Falkenburger, Olivia Arena, and Jessica Wolin Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement



# Strategies for working with communities that have experienced trauma

- Community-Driven Research toward Community Organizing and Policy Change
- Peer to Peer approaches
- Creative or Personal Expression and Placemaking
- Grief Work, Emotional Support, and Restorative Justice

Elsa Falkenburger, Olivia Arena, and Jessica Wolin <u>Trauma-Informed Community Building and Engagement</u>

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Practices of
Trauma-Informed
Community Building
and Engagement



#### Individual

- Provide opportunities for multiple interactions
- Ensure incentives and sense of personal reward
- Meet residents where they are
- Develop authentic relationships-set realistic expectations and never over promise

#### Community

- Expand efforts through incremental growth, building from success
- Ensure that sustainability and quality is criteria for implementation and involvement in community efforts
- Provide visible, tangible activities that reflect community change
- Cultivate community leadership through support and skill building

#### Interpersonal

- Model healthy behaviors
- Support peer to peer activities and interactions
- Provide opportunities that cultivate shared positive
- experiences
- Ensure all activities allow for personal sharing and mutual support

#### Systems

- Reflect community voices and priorities to stakeholders
- Build partnerships for long-term investments in community change and effective service delivery
- Advance long term community vision and develop community wide strategy to reach goals

# We're impacted by doing this work

#### **Vicarious Trauma**

Refers to changes in the person's view of self, others, and the world resulting from repeated empathic engagement with patients' trauma-related thoughts, memories, and emotions.

# **Compassion Fatigue**

Refers to the profound emotional and physical erosion that takes place when helpers are unable to refuel and regenerate.

#### **Burnout**

Cumulative process marked by emotional exhaustion and withdrawal associated with increased workload and institutional stress, NOT trauma-related.

# Tips for taking care

- Get educated
- Create a self care plan
- Set emotional boundaries
- Practice breathwork & meditation
- Find someone to talk to
- Engage in outside hobbies
- Try journaling
- Use positive coping strategies
- Identify workplace strategies



Good Therapy

The Cost of Caring: 10 Ways to Prevent Compassion Fatigue

"Vicarious resilience is the unique and positive effect that transforms service workers in response to trauma survivors' own resiliency."



## Good luck!

I hope you'll use these tips to enhance your ability to support positive changes in the communities you serve and that you continue to chip away at structural inequities, violences, and barriers created by trauma

I can send out more resources about trauma-informed libraries and trauma informed community engagement to interested parties. Feel free to email me at <a href="mailto:oaloziem@denverlibrary.org">oaloziem@denverlibrary.org</a>

### Additional resources

- Trauma Informed Community Building Evaluation Infographic: A Formative Evaluation of the TICB Model and Its Implementation in Potrero Hill
- Building Resilient and Trauma-Informed Communities Introduction
- Free online learning on Building Compassionate Communities for Public Libraries
- The Return to the Sacred Path: Reflections on the Development of Historical Trauma Healing
- <u>Trauma Informed Community Building: The Evolution of a Community Engagement Model in a Trauma Impacted Neighborhood</u>
- <u>Trauma Lens Exercise: Reframing Difficult Behavior Through a Trauma-Informed Lens</u>
- Find a Mental Health First Aid Course
- Road Map to Trauma Informed Care