

UNDERSTANDING HOW TRAUMA WEAVES IN TO THE HUMAN SIDE OF LICENSING

2018

Introduction

WORKING DEFINITION OF TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (2015), trauma informed care (TIC) can be defined as “An approach that explicitly acknowledges the role trauma plays in people’s lives. TIC means that every part of an organization or program understands the impact of trauma on the individuals they serve and promotes cultural and organization change in responding to the consumers/clients served.”

WHAT IS TRAUMA INFORMED CARE (TIC)?

“TIC takes a trauma-informed approach to the delivery of behavior health services that includes an understanding of trauma and an awareness of the impact it can have across settings, services, and populations. TIC views trauma through an ecological and cultural lens and recognizes that context plays a significant role in how individuals perceive and process traumatic events, whether acute or chronic. TIC involves vigilance in anticipating and avoiding institutional processes and individual practices that are likely to retraumatize individuals who already have histories of trauma. TIC upholds the importance of consumer participation in the development, delivery, and evaluation of services,” (SAMHSA, 2015).

WORKING DEFINITION OF LICENSING

Licensing is a preventive program which is FUTURE ORIENTED. Licensing reduces future risks, thereby protects vulnerable children or adults in care in regulated environments, such as foster care homes, assisted living programs, or child care programs. Licensing is protection by prevention.

Ernest Freund noted “Licensing is the administrative lifting of a legislative prohibition”. As defined by Freund, licensing involves the exercise of power or governmental authority. It is the licensing process that gives substance to regulation. The licensing process consists of a logical sequence of prescribed activities that results in a licensing decision or action. (NARA Curriculum, 2000).

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The licensing process is essentially concerned with a series of operational steps that may ultimately permit an individual or organization to provide an otherwise prohibited activity. The phases are: inquiry, application, inspections, license issuance decision, compliance monitoring and renewal. (NARA Curriculum Chapter 3 Phases of Licensing, 2000). Utilizing a trauma-informed care approach to the licensing process sets the stage to protect those served minimizing the risk of retraumatizing an individual with a history of trauma.

Understanding Trauma

Licensing professionals need a shared understanding of trauma and the impact trauma has on the individuals they serve.

Trauma informed care views symptoms as adaptations to traumatic events and an avenue to understand what is driving a behavior versus making an assumption that the individual is being uncooperative. Empathy with people is a choice which makes us vulnerable and requires us to connect with ourselves and learn to ask "What happened to you?" versus "What is wrong with you?" TIC asserts healing for individuals and happens through developing relationships where connections are made and serve to foster the "do no harm" concept.

The three "E's" of trauma are events, experience, and effects. Events places focus on the cause of trauma in the environment and not some defect of the individual. Experience brings to light that not all will experience the event as traumatic. Effects is to remind us that a response is key in allowing the individual to learn and grow from the interaction.

Signs of trauma responses can be behavioral, emotional/physical or psychological. Behavioral responses may include an individual becoming verbally aggressive or hostile when being corrected, or resistant to change. Emotional/physical responses may include being over sensitive, difficulty trusting, or extreme fearfulness or shyness. Psychological responses may include inability to process information, unable to verbally express self, or appear confused/disoriented. Just being aware that these symptoms may be driven by adaptations of potential experienced trauma will change how the individual is viewed from being difficult to being someone who needs additional support through a situation.

Core Guiding Principles of TIC are safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support and mutual self-help, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice and choice, and cultural, historical and gender issues.

- Individuals served need to feel physically and psychologically safe during interactions.
- Decisions made for individuals served need to display trustworthiness through making tasks clear, maintaining healthy boundaries, building trust and operating with transparency.
- Utilizing peer support and promoting self-help in the service delivery approach allow for an individual to build trust, establish safety, and feel empowered.
- Sharing of power and decision-making through collaboration and mutuality allow for a meaningful relationship to evolve between those served, staff and the organization.
- Individuals who are empowered, given a voice and choice has the potential to build on developing a positive outcome, and strengthen the individuals' skill set.
- Moving past cultural stereotypes and biases provides opportunity for individuals to receive gender responsive services valuing cultural connections derived from historical trauma.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Licensing Authority is to ensure protection for clients/consumers and promote public health through the licensing and surveying of the Licensee. The licensing process implements the regulatory process to ensure the equitable treatment of applicants or licensees toward the end of reducing risks and safeguarding vulnerable persons.

The Licensing Authority should have 3 goals:

1. Assure clients/consumers served receive the highest quality of services practical in accordance with state and federal regulations.
2. Promote and assure safe, healthy and accessible care for the clients/consumers served.
3. Complete licensing, including follow-up surveys, and complaint investigations to assure the adequate care and treatment of clients/consumers in safe, sanitary and functional environments.

Working together, professionals at all levels within the Licensing Authority system and related agencies should have a shared understanding of TIC in order to benefit staff, communities, families, children, youth and adults as they heal from trauma and move forward in living healthy productive lives.

The role of providers and the Licensing Authority is to identify needed information, resources, and avenues in transferring that information to include in state standards/rule making processes as well as in training.

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The human side of licensing is all about relationships. A humanistic approach facilitates retention of providers while fostering a partnership for the protection of consumers through licensing.

NARA's "Best Practices for Human Care Regulation" requires the Licensing Authority to "Remain current on trends and research-based practices." In order for a Licensing Authority to fulfill their role in education, promotion, and enforcement of mandated reporting a shared understanding in TIC is imperative. It is time to consider a call to action for all states to review their current regulations and ensure they are trauma informed and provide staff professional development so a shared understanding of trauma informed care becomes a reality.

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