

A LOOK INSIDE Trauma-Informed Care

Dear Valued Partner,

Supporting those who have had traumatic experiences is critical in promoting resiliency and recovery. Our members focus on addressing trauma and toxic stress in childhood, building resilience among children and their families, and improving systems that support those who have experienced trauma.

Events that cause trauma and toxic events in childhood can include:

- Physical, sexual, and emotional abuse
- Physical and emotional neglect
- Experiencing or witnessing violence
- Substance misuse within household
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

The wide-ranging health and social consequences of experiencing trauma underscore the importance of preventing such consequences before they happen. On a local level, two of our members shared their thoughts and protocols for approaching trauma-informed care.

Almost **two-thirds** of surveyed adults reported experiencing trauma as a child. www.cdc.gov

Children who are exposed to chronic stressful events often have impaired cognitive functioning or lack the ability to cope with negative emotions. This can result in negative coping mechanisms, including substance use or self-harm, which might eventually lead to disease, disability, social problems, and premature mortality.

Engaging in early identification of people who have experienced traumatic events can have a significant impact on critical health problems.

In June 2017, **The Health Center** in Plainfield began a pilot program to assess patients using an adverse childhood experiences questionnaire. The success of the pilot resulted in implementing the screening tool organization-wide by making these steps part of every patient visit:

- Introducing the adverse childhood experiences survey;
- Asking the patient to take the 10 question survey;
- Recording the score in the EMR; and
- Providing resources on practices in resilience and/or referrals to trauma counseling.

Community Health Centers of Burlington implemented a universal screening of patients for depression and substance use, with a secondary screening that includes asking about traumatic experiences. Their embedded Behavioral Health Consultants use the PHQ-9, AUDIT, DAST, and PCL-5 trauma screening tools to:

- Understand current and past mental health, substance use, and trauma experienced in childhood and adulthood;
- Assess severity;
- Aid in diagnosing trauma-related disorders at point of medical visit (during which time psychoeducation and brief intervention is provided);
- Refer to in-house trauma therapists who are trained in trauma-informed modalities; and
- Perform prevention work in their obstetrics clinic during prenatal and post-partum patient visits.

10 KEY INGREDIENTS FOR TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE



“I am screening one patient at a time. It is quite personal and powerful.” – Kimberly Pierce, PA
The Health Center