

Trauma Informed Care Workshop
Working with Children, Adults, and Families in the Home:
Safety as a Foundation of Trauma-Informed Care

Table Café Learning from Each Other – local small group discussions/experience sharing on physical and psychological safety in home visits. Below is what participants said.

Physical Safety

What does physical safety mean to you?

- Not feeling threatened, getting hurt.
- Having a safety plan, a “tool box” to draw on and feeling confident in my skills.
- Trusting my gut feelings.
- Having personal space, wearing safe shoes, not wearing a lanyard around my neck.
- Being aware of the house/environment – know where exits are, who is in the house, knowing the animals in the house, and wear to park.
- Take into meeting only what I need, be open with family, understand their attitude, ask permission, respect boundaries.
- Leave if I need to.
- Someone knows where I am, have a backup and good relationship with law enforcement.

What do you need to feel physically safe?

- Have a relationship with family, understand their language, know their story, know behavioral triggers and signs of escalation. Knowing what to expect prior to visit, know the house.
- Know my limitations, have coping strategies for the moment.
- Have a charged cell phone, GPS, and pepper spray, mace or self-defense skills.
- Have supervisor support, code word to text to coworker, have peers know when I should return, option to take someone with me.

What obstacles have you experienced that impeded your ability to feel safe?

- Being caught off guard – lots of activity in the house, going to visit alone when client has history of violence, unsafe community outside of house.
- Mental health, substance abuse, and verbal altercations between people in house.
- Not being welcome or being intimidated.
- Weapons in the house.
- Being far away from the door, lack of cell phone service.
- Being a mandated reporter
- When co-worker and I aren't on the same page.
- Lack of available supports.

What strategies do you use to make yourself feel safe?

- Be flexible, add humor, divert attention.
- Know my boundaries and be able to take a break. Self-talk and self-regulation.
- Be aware of how I dress, jewelry I wear, follow gut feelings.
- Body language – sit tall, look confident if afraid.
- Have an exit strategy, ask if others are in the house, learn the area, park in a safe location, have dog treats.
- Establish relationship with family quickly, know client's behaviors and triggers, set expectations about visits, have open, respectful, and clear communications.
- Shift agenda based on temperature in room. Show hands, stop taking notes – ways to de-escalate situation.

Who or what are your key ingredients for physical safety?

- Training, self-defense classes.
- Trust, start with the good things, being transparent during discussion.
- Unannounced visits/drug tests are barriers to relationship building.
- Think about client's feelings – living in unsafe house.
- Shared calendars, going with someone to visit, cell phone, pepper spray.
- Surety of what I am doing, my intuition, having options, gathering information prior to visit, comfortable attire, physical positioning.

Psychological Safety

What does psychological safety mean to you?

- Being emotionally self-aware, control my responses, know my triggers.
- Being able to separate work from personal – work/life balance.
- Resiliency.
- Not feeling physically threatened
- Having adequate training, support from supervisor, trusting my team – they know where I am.
- Being aware of other's triggers, being able to help clients, establish rapport, staying calm and focused.

How do we ensure that our daily interactions are influenced by our increasing trauma knowledge?

- As a new employee have experienced coworker/supervisor go along.
- Continue to grow TIC toolbox.
- Debriefing with co-workers/supervisor.
- Acknowledging my limitations, areas of expertise.
- Asking family “what happened?” Understanding their story and triggers, listening, being empathic over sympathetic.
- Don't project past experiences on to new family.

How is the language (words) that we are using heard by others?

- Different generations hear things differently.
- Be aware of culture/population I am dealing with.
- Ask family their preferences, that they ask questions to ensure their understanding.
- Use plain language, watch acronyms, watch tone, strengths perspective.

How do you model transparency?

- Explain my role, lay out clear expectations, follow through, remind them I am a mandated reporter.
- Be professional at family's level, be open and honest.
- Be honest when I make an error.
- Let go of first impressions.
- Don't cross boundaries.

How do you interact with your consumer – as a client or as a person?

- Balance people first then client while maintaining professional boundaries.
- Be at same level with them, particularly with children.
- Establish relationship, we are on the same team with a common goal.
- Based on cues from the person I am dealing with.