

# Trauma Informed Practice in the Classroom



Classroom



**Traumatic Events:** threatens injury, death, or the physical integrity of the self and others; and causes horror, terror and/or feelings of helplessness such as terrorism or natural or human-made disasters.

Compounding factors are things such as race, poverty and gender. The good news is that *resiliency* helps the return to normal functioning. The goal should be students developing their own frameworks to self-adjust their problem-solving soft skills. According to the CDC, 1 in 7 children are impacted by trauma. Children in poverty are more likely to suffer trauma from abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, of the CDC and National Child Abuse and Neglect data of 2015, 52% of children received post-response services such as social work follow-up services or a case service plan from a counselor. That leaves 48% of children, mostly only contained by public school, left to mature and learn within the system and without counseling, increase of protective factors, or systematic change

**Trauma and the Brain:** increased levels of stress hormones as the brain remains in survival mode. Stress hormones like cortisol and testosterone create physical impacts such as lack of sleep, increased hunger, and decreased impulse control. Long term effects can be externalized OR internalized. Brain stressors can be toxic or tolerable depending on their protective factors. Pipe cleaners, legos, and Kinnex games with the brain architecture game to roll dice with build synaptic connections, strengthened brain health, etc. ← This game to mimic brain structures and functioning would be a helpful and hands-on activity during teacher in-service or an advanced placement psych class for high schoolers.

What are ways to combat the traumatic influences on the brain?

Put more resources into prevention options in education such as free-and-reduced lunch, 21CCLC programs, family literacy nights, English Language Learner resources, preschool, and more. Two large protective factors that counterbalance trauma are literacy and hope. Also, put mentors in front of students, especially if they share the same demographics of race/gender/socio-economic status/religion. Students will thrive when they see individuals with their same demographics having successful occupations.

**De-escalation techniques:** anticipate issues rather than react and give student positive options. Goal is to help students and staff build capacity to manage stress, exclusion or removal of the classroom do not meet achievement goals. Involve students in their de-escalation plan and include admin staff and parent/guardian; then, utilize the strategies routinely and if the student escalates → revisit the plan and wrap in more supports to assist student with feeling safe and on track.

**Predictable Routines and Expectations:** A classroom routine is the response to the habitual directive that remains consistent. The beginning of class time or the day sets the tone for the remainder of the day. An extension of this would be that the first few days/weeks of school will set the tone for the remainder of the year. There is some value in the old narrative, “don’t smile til Christmas” because students first need to appreciate your boundaries and expectations before they can appreciate your individualism and leniency. Give students who’ve experienced trauma in case specific situations a ‘heads up’ warning. For

example, if there is a guest speaker about suicide prevention and the student has lost somebody to suicide, let them know of this in advance

Verbal and Non-verbal Check Ins- Communicating with students. Check in with fist to five technique—a fist is 0 which means they are not feeling well or motivated at all whereas the 5 is inspired and ready to learn. Encourage students to journal on learning reflections and aspirations.

**Offer Choice in Instruction and Procedures:** Children make their own goals and lesson objectives. It will build student interest and competencies. Another example of this is student led parent teacher conferences. Build on student interest such as making your math word problems all about Minecraft for a week or your persuasion lesson rooted in *Divergent* and *Hunger Games*. Have students make authentic classroom guidelines and normal expectations such as bathroom passes. Especially students who have been exposed to trauma, they need their voice heard and respected as well as have experience with control and ownership for outcomes. Use the theme of the children’s interest to explain higher order concepts such as academic vocabulary; for example using Instagram trending hashtags to make book report summaries.

**Maintain Behavior Expectations Consistent with Peers:** Provide appropriate accommodations. If there are group work presentations or project-based learning assignments, give scaffolding and positive reinforcements consistently. Catch the student being good. Instead of “stop being disrespectful” and then calling the absent mother three times after school, tell the student one day “hey, even though you were off task a little, I appreciate and love the way you didn’t distract your peers during test time. . . maybe we can retake that test together sometime after school sometime.”

**Provide Positive Behavior Supports:** One negative connotation or experience with school needs balance with approximately ten positive reinforcements. Catch students being good rather than chiding them for being bad. Try to increase the capacity for intrinsic motivation rather than using extrinsic incentives to perform compliance. Help students identify their own values; for example, have your elementary students pick between humor, truth, and kindness and depending on their responses, cater their incentives to those values. Correct the student in private and praise them in public with positive attention from their peers. Giving positive behavior supports and encouragement increases the teacher’s likelihood to remain optimistic and have positive mental health.

**Sensitivity to Triggers in Lesson Planning:** Knowing the students’ triggers such as reading non-fiction articles about prison rates when a student may have a parent that is currently serving jail time. Understand all students are not from ‘traditional’ families or have some transient family situations. In education settings, making a family tree could be overwhelming and stressful for students. Rather than competing for who had the best summer for share time, have students create fictional stories instead. Know some history of the community you’re teaching in, especially if you’re new to the area. For example, if there was a major disaster in the form of a flood in 2011, there may be triggered reactions in some students when studying the weather patterns.

**Build Non-academic relationships with students and support Extra-Curricular Activities:** Connect with them on popular literature that they are enjoying. Notice and compliment students if you see any of them playing in competitive sports or performing arts. Encourage students to take risks in joining a new club or trying a new sport. Following up with students longitudinally. Attending the 21CCLC after school program helps.

Overall, maintaining with highlighting positive language and then resiliency building and positive impact.



**Division of Social Services.** Child Protection does not have the authority to remove children from their homes. Judges need to sign the orders. *The goal after children are removed is to reunify them within twelve months.* More and more females are perpetrators in abuse cases. Physical neglect is the highest number of reports both in SD and nationwide.

**Perceptions and Bias-** DSS serves people with alcohol, drug, and sex addictions. They deal with individuals who are experiencing crisis. Different cultures are arriving in South Dakota. Oftentimes, the DSS and empathy workers are working with people who have been abused or neglected, themselves. All these professions are mandatory reporters: Physician, Nurse, Dentist, Child Welfare Provider, Doctor, Chiropractor, Hospital and School Personnel, Law Enforcement, Mental Health Professional or counselor, Psychologist, Domestic Abuse Shelter, Clergy, Teacher, Social Worker, any safety-sensitive position

The 4 kinds of abuse and neglect: Physical Abuse, Sexual Abuse, Neglect, Emotional Maltreatment

**Neglect-** Parent, guardian or custodian is failing to provide for a child's basic needs such as food, medical care, shelter, education, emotional stimulation, clothing, etc. The failure to meet the basic needs threatens the child's immediate health and safety or an impending danger if there is a pattern. Neglect results in a children's failure to thrive. Dirty homes are a frequent symptom of neglect.

**Emotional Maltreatment** is one of the hardest to prove because it is so subjective. Appropriate psychological growth is difficult to determine because of individuals variation in personality. Must be a result in an observable or measurable impairment of the child.

**Sex trafficking** happens most often in South Dakota during pheasant hunting season and the Sturgis Rally. Large gatherings of men creates a potential for problems with prostitution. Also, Native American Reservations are so vulnerable because of the Lakota genocide and historical trauma. Alcoholism can ignite high risk because adults barter children and women in exchange for sex and drugs.

**1-877-244-0864 South Dakota hotline 8-5 Monday through Friday**

**What the intake specialist will gather during a report:** Name, date of birth of the child, the parents' name, other household members, and non-resident parents. Permanent address of child and the present of the child. Names and address of parent. The description of the concerns relating to the abuse/neglect. What happened before, what the specific words the child told you pee pee vs. vagina, when this happened

and who possibly could have witnessed it, general functioning of the household, if any safety needs are arising in the home that the DSS or law enforcement staff need to be aware of, discipline strategies spanking vs. not, family and tribal information/affiliation. The reporter's demographics are also documented: Reporter's name, telephone number.

**When in doubt, report.** Document your report and the responding letter from DSS. Check in with your school for documentation policies and procedures—where to store documents and when they should be destroyed. To maintain rapport and fidelity with student, let them know you'll be making a report with the student/family if allowed. Sometimes, a posting of "What you say in here, stays in here unless you have been hurt from somebody or you have hurt yourself"

**Initial Family Assessment** is the acronym of IFA. Regardless of the allegation, all forms of abuse are assessed) Children and parents are interviewed. Assess for present danger which is an immediate, significant, and clearly observable. The present danger plan is the least intrusive approach. It is an instantaneous (same day) short-term, sufficient strategy that provides a child responsible adult supervision and care to allow for the completion of the family functioning assessment. An assessment roughly takes thirty to forty days to complete from the initial opening date of arriving at the door. Law enforcement and court are the only ones who can remove children from the home. Protective Capacity Assessment is a structured interactive process that is intended to build partnerships and build strengths. DSS has twelve months to work with a family to build reunification process. If after the twelve months they cannot maintain parental rights, DSS can make a recommendation to remove parental rights

[www.fosteronesd.org](http://www.fosteronesd.org) → or be a safety plan provider

Oral report of abuse or neglect. In South Dakota, a report must be made orally and immediately by telephone or otherwise to the state's attorney. Police law enforcement and child protection may enter a school or daycare without the parents' consent if there is a suspicion of child abuse or neglect.

If a parent is intoxicated or otherwise under the influence, call the police before calling DSS.

**How do we better support mandatory reporters and how do we educate mandatory reporters while they are still in University?** Very few course descriptions identify how to accurately identify, make a report, and prevention of child maltreatment. Schools should utilize internships and practicums and ideally be able to make a mandatory report during that time. All staff meetings should incorporate refreshers on mandatory reporting mandates and administrative supports. Schools should make a schoolwide plan for making reports in the most timely fashion possible, and how their leaders will help with classroom management or paperwork if necessary while the teacher is making the report.

Aberdeen's administrators, counselors, and teachers have access to something like a GoogleDoc. The report then goes to the local police department and then a phone call to DSS. Clearly post the reporting number in the school.

Privileged communication- students have rights to have communication with a mental health professional.

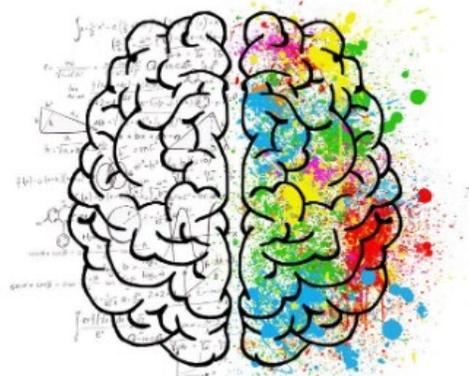
Aberdeen's Example of Abuse and Neglect Risk Screenings.

It is up to the district to create their own school policies. The risk screening is not a risk assessment. Risk assessment needs to be more comprehensive and encompassing of true mental health rather than just a check mark of yes/no.

Confidentiality: Mandatory reporting for child abuse or neglect is part of a school counselor and school psychologist's ethical and legal role in breaking confidentiality.

What are the linking resources for DSS and school counselors?

## Understanding ACEs in your School



Teacher teams and administrator teams are kind of at a crisis point because educators are at capacity with helping students and families.

Issues are stored in the tissues. Children's bodies and brains hold on to traumatic events and memories and thus have a likelihood for compromised immune system, fragile impulse control, fine and gross motor delays, impaired brain development with higher order cognitive functioning, stunted growth, harbored fat tissue, bed wetting, and more. The younger people are when traumatic experiences happen, the higher the adverse or problematic impact has.

**Brain Physiology:** The type of maltreatment, gender, and age of maltreatment have different cause and effect outcomes. Brain development patterns are linear, the survival reptilian brain develops first whereas the frontal lobe for decision making and executive functioning develop last. Your limbic system is what develops first, and regulates hormones, mood, sex drive, learning memory, reward/reinforcement. Amygdala and hippocampus host the 'ego' and relationship portion—if kids with high ACEs have their amygdala compromised with trauma, thus giving them a hard time with regulation of social cues and time management. fMRI show different brain scans for children and infants who have experienced trauma vs. not. Cerebellar vermis is the seed of mental health and is very sensitive to all forms of maltreatment.

When adaptations to trauma vs. expectations to behave collide students run into trouble. ACEs scores accurately predict health challenges during life course. ACE situations rarely happen in isolation. Collective understanding must be a prerequisite to battling ACEs both schoolwide and communitywide. Behaviorally, teachers should deliberately teach social skills from pre-school to twelfth grade. An example of this would be intentionally teaching social skills such as showing students throughout the year that it is impolite or a distraction to sharpen a pencil during instructions, then ask questions that were answered in the instructions. A rubric of social-emotional expectations could be helpful **Safe Organized Accountable Respectful** → google Positive Behavior Intervention Support for a schoolwide matrix. During an Inservice, ensure that teachers and administrators are on the same page with a flow chart of

behavior consequences (go to principal office or not) and also clarify on vocabulary for consequences “no tolerance”, profanity, etc.