

Trauma is an issue that crosses service systems and requires specialized knowledge, training and collaboration skills. The Department of Human Services' Division of Mental Health and Addiction Services recognizes that recovery from trauma is possible in a system that is trauma-informed with staff who are sensitive to the needs of survivors. As such, the Division developed a Train-the-Trainer project to infuse the public system of mental health and addiction with Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training, coupled with an introduction to Trauma Informed Care. MHFA focuses on how to identify, assess, clarify, and diffuse situations, so it provides a good foundation to approach and intervene with individuals who have trauma. It is appropriate for all staff: clinical, administrative, direct care, food service, acute care. This combined training provides:

- trauma understanding, awareness and sensitivity
- potential risk factors, warning signs, and ways to approach individuals with a range of mental health problems including: depression, anxiety, trauma, psychosis, aggression, substance use disorders, and self-injury
- understanding prevalence of various mental health disorders, including trauma issues, and stigma
- ability to defuse incidents and crisis
- increased efficiency in treatment
- engagement, approach and language
- 5-step action plan encompassing the skills, resources and knowledge to assess situations, to select and implement appropriate interventions, and to help an individual to connect
- evidence-based professional, peer, social, and self-help resources available to help someone with issues related to mental health.

There were over 10 applications received for each opening, and selection was not easy. Those who were chosen as potential trainers were the individuals who were able to describe a plan to roll out this combined approach to the described target population in a clear, comprehensive way that was in line with the intent described in the original request for applications. Our trainers are providing this service to the system as volunteers: taking time from their typical work in one of our contract agencies to assist us in our effort to become trauma sensitive, and expand this approach widely.

From December 16 – 20, 2013, our 30 trainers were sequestered in our first floor conference room, receiving 9 hour a day intensive training, plus homework and exams from the National Council on Behavioral Healthcare. The National Council has called the use of this Evidence Based Practice as the preferred method to approach, communicate, engage, and implement appropriate intervention for trauma informed care as “innovative and ground breaking use of this technique.” At the end of the week, an exhausted and passionate group of trainers graduated and are certified to teach. Over the next year, each of our 30 trainers will be providing a minimum of 3 training sessions on Trauma Informed System, and Mental Health First Aid throughout the state, to our hospitals and contract agencies. Those who take this training will be certified practitioners.

