

# TRAUMATIC STRESS IN CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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# OVERVIEW

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- ✘ Trauma, risk, adverse early childhood events, and toxic stress
- ✘ Trauma and children's development
  - + How does research inform practice?
- ✘ Trauma-informed practice

# DEFINING TRAUMA

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- ✘ In its definition of posttraumatic stress disorder, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual uses this definition of trauma: an event or events the person experienced, witnessed, or was confronted with that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others.

# EARLY ADVERSE EXPERIENCES

- ✘ Also known as toxic stress, adverse childhood experiences, and cumulative risk
  - + These may or may not be events that threaten life or limb, e.g. impaired caregiver (substance abuse, mental illness); homelessness
  - + These events or experiences
    - ✘ Tend to pile up and co-occur
    - ✘ Have cumulative effects on children's healthy development – and on subsequent development in adulthood
  - + BUT, not all events are equal!

# MALTREATMENT

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- ✘ Large body of research demonstrates effects of physical abuse, sexual abuse and neglect on:
  - + Social-emotional functioning
    - ✘ E.g. trust, judgment, interpersonal decision-making, social skills
  - + Brain development
    - ✘ E.g. stress responses ('flight or fight')
  - + Physical development
  - + Cognitive development
    - ✘ Capacity to learn, problem-solve, etc

# RESILIENCE

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- ✘ Typical development (doing 'OK' despite exposure to adversity)
  - ✘ "Ordinary magic" (Masten, 2001)
- ✘ Longitudinal studies that follow children over many years indicate that resilience is associated with individual and family factors
  - + Effective parent or caregiver
  - + Child characteristics
- ✘ **Resilience is a dynamic process, which means it is amenable to intervention**
  - + E.g. prevention and treatment interventions can put children back on typical developmental trajectories (improving social, emotional, and cognitive functioning, as well as physical health)

# PAYING ATTENTION TO PARENTS

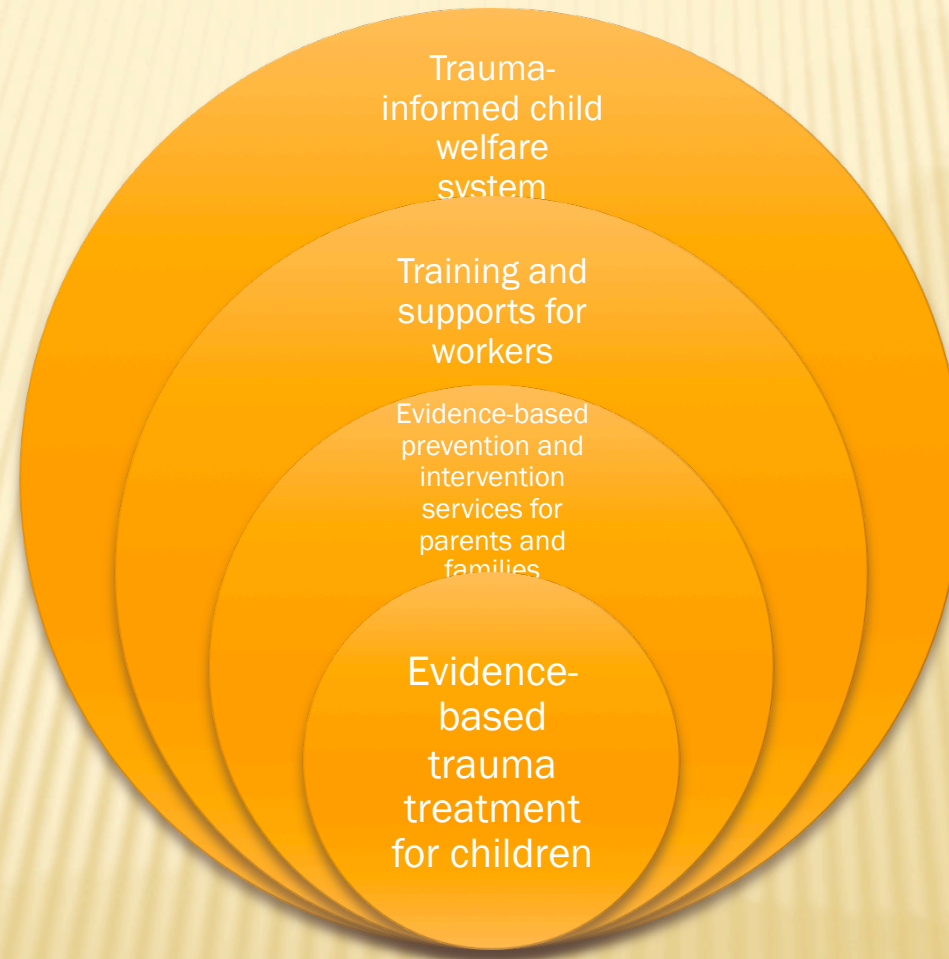
- ✘ Cycle of violence/intergenerational patterns well-established
  - ✘ Abuse and neglect experienced in childhood is associated with later victimization and perpetration
  - ✘ Parents who themselves were maltreated may find it harder to parent effectively
- ✘ Parenting is crucial – parents matter most to their children when circumstances are high
  - + Effective parenting buffers children from the risks for depression and behavior problems (substance use, antisocial behavior, school dropout, etc)
  - + Parenting CAN be taught! There is a strong evidence base for parenting interventions in the child welfare system
    - ✘ Parent management training-Oregon model/Parenting Through Change
    - ✘ Multi-dimensional treatment foster care – preschool/early intervention foster care

# PROMOTING SAFETY, PERMANENCY, AND WELLBEING FOR MALTREATED CHILDREN

- ✘ Provide services that recognize what children have experienced
  - + Train child welfare workforce to identify traumatic stress (what happened to you? Vs. what did you do?)
  - + Requires trauma-informed service systems and
  - + Evidence-based intervention and prevention services
- ✘ Provide children and their parents with the effective services they need
  - + E.g. trauma-focused parent training (ADAPT)
    - ✘ Kansas child welfare system
  - + Trauma-focused cognitive behavior therapy



# WHAT IS TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICE?



# TRAUMA INFORMED CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

- ✘ Leadership championing and commitment at all levels of the system
- ✘ Training for all providers in childhood trauma
  - + Core curriculum in child trauma (an evidence-based training curriculum to help workers understand the impact of traumatic stress on children using case-based learning)
- ✘ Strong collaboration with other child-serving systems
- ✘ Identification, screening, and assessment of traumatized children
- ✘ Referrals to effective services

# TRAUMA-INFORMED SYSTEMS WORK UNDERWAY IN MINNESOTA

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- ✘ Central Minnesota (four counties) - leadership team from all child-serving systems; training and planning completed, referral mechanisms in place
- ✘ South East MN Supercommunity – detailed strategic plan in place. CW staff to start training; juvenile justice and Red Wing staff already trained
- ✘ Ramsey County – lead team in place. Focus on JJ system. All corrections staff to be trained in Jan
- ✘ White Earth - leadership team, trained over 300 child serving practitioners. Working with Circle of Life Academy to develop a trauma informed school

# TRAUMA-FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIOR THERAPY FOR CHILDREN IN MINNESOTA

- ✘ Ambit Network, in partnership with MN DHS, has provided training to:
  - + 489 mental health professionals (in 77 agencies)
  - + who have served over 2800 traumatized children and youth
  - + Over 3000 'front door' human service professionals in the child welfare, juvenile justice, education, and law enforcement systems have been trained in trauma-informed practice
  - + Trauma screener is under development for use by front line providers with children

# RESOURCES

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- ✘ Trauma-informed child welfare system:  
<http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/child-welfare-system>
- ✘ The above links to:
  - + Child welfare trauma training toolkit
  - + Fact sheets on birth parents and the child welfare system
  - + Resource parent curriculum

# EVIDENCE-BASED PARENTING RESOURCES

- × Parenting resources, examples:
- × Kansas Intensive Permanency project:  
<https://cbexpress.acf.hhs.gov/index.cfm?event=website.viewArticles&issueid=131&articleid=3335>
- × Parenting Through Change  
<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=67>
- × ADAPT for military families
- × <http://www.cehd.umn.edu/fsos/projects/adapt/default.asp>

# THANK YOU

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- ✘ National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
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