

Trauma-Informed Care: A DECADE OF LEADERSHIP

WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Nearly everyone has experienced stress, but trauma occurs when stress overloads the nervous system. Common triggers include violence, neglect, discrimination and poverty.¹

While some effects remain unknown or unseen, trauma can result in long-lasting adverse outcomes, especially on children. Trauma can impact brain development, rewiring the brain in response to stress. This can lead to depression, anxiety, substance use, and increased risk for chronic diseases, behavioral disorders or suicide.²

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic experiences that can divert critical phases of brain development. These adverse events are pervasive and do not discriminate. In fact, 60% of US adults have one ACE, 25% have 3+ ACEs, and 16% have 4+ ACEs.³ However, such adverse experiences are more common in community environments that suffer from poverty, community disruption, lack of opportunity, poor housing quality and/or violence.⁴

BUILDING A TRAUMA-INFORMED REGION

While the ultimate goal is to prevent ACEs entirely, it is equally essential to understand and appreciate the nature of trauma. United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey (United Way) has led a movement over the last ten years to increase awareness, provide resources and forge innovative partnerships to support those affected by trauma.

United Way's mission to raise trauma awareness stems from a focus on the importance of family and parenting to a child's success. From the launch of the Healthy Parenting initiative in 2009, United Way has progressively invested in causes related to raising trauma awareness and promoting trauma-informed care. This way, we can better understand the role trauma may play in an individual's life and employ skills that promote health and healing. For over ten years, our persistence, creativity and cooperative efforts have directly impacted the lives of more than 33,000 residents.





FROM “WHAT’S WRONG” TO “WHAT HAPPENED”

To address trauma-related problems, care providers and community members must be educated about trauma and recovery. In fact, through trauma-informed care, children and people can heal and flourish. United Way’s sponsorship of the non-profit Lakeside Global Institute (LGI), over an approximately 15-year time span, has been at the heart of virtually all of our trauma work. Through our support, LGI has grown into a nationally-known authority on trauma and trauma-informed education. United Way has invested more than \$7 million into LGI’s mission as well as numerous other partnerships dedicated to understanding trauma and applying trauma-informed principles. Highlights of our partnership include:

Trauma-Informed Education

A comprehensive approach to trauma, backed by proper support, is needed to create true cultural change. In close collaboration, United Way and LGI developed, deployed and scaled a systematic trauma training program to provide our region with the resources and tools necessary to understand trauma. These programs are tailored for different audiences, including parents, educators and behavioral health specialists. United Way was paramount in expanding this program to diverse audiences, resulting in over 900 professionals trained in over 63 PA counties. By realizing the widespread impact of trauma and learning the signs and symptoms of ACEs through our programs, these professionals can now combat the inequitable outcomes that trauma causes. In so doing, hundreds of professionals can better help their communities thrive. This summer, LGI will relaunch its curriculum and offerings, updated to include the integration of racism and generational trauma.

Delaware County Trauma Alliance

A difficulty for many social organizations in becoming trauma-informed is simply not knowing where to begin. When Delaware County (DELCO) started its mission to become more trauma competent, United Way bridged the gap by creating instrumental partnerships between DELCO and LGI. This relationship forged by United Way resulted in the Delaware County Trauma Alliance (DTA), which deployed training programs to first responders and social service agencies as well as judges and attorneys for juvenile court. This shift in approach created a systematic change within the DELCO judicial system due to the increased understanding that a child’s behavior may result from trauma. By embracing trauma-informed care, DELCO has seen a drastic reduction in juvenile detention and fewer children returned to foster care. Using the policies and practices established by United Way, DTA created a 10-year plan to continue to move the county to become trauma competent.

Philadelphia School District

Caring and understanding educators are essential to creating a trauma-informed region, so United Way and LGI partnered with the School District of Philadelphia to provide free trauma-informed care courses for school staff. Funded by United Way, these classes were offered to counselors, school psychologists, principals, administrators and teachers. By the end of 2020, over 3500 people participated, with 232 members completing the entire series and certified as “trauma competent.”



Now it’s at a point that when we announce that we are opening registration, usually it’s around midnight – *by about 5 or 10 minutes after midnight, every course is filled with a waiting list.* And the teachers come, and they do homework, and they are actively engaged, and they get no money for it – they do it after school on their own time. *It’s been a phenomenal success.*

CAROLE HAAS GRAVAGNO



FUTURE OUTLOOK

Addressing trauma can be challenging. Truly understanding trauma and building an inclusive support network takes significant time and resources. Our region's future depends on an innovative and comprehensive plan to be trauma-informed and what that means to different people. Our strategies must focus on quality training, rigorous evaluation, community-led efforts and greater accessibility to educational resources.

The past year revealed the widespread severity of trauma, as the world experienced the pandemic, civil unrest, and economic inequality. In July 2020, Governor Wolf introduced the "Trauma-Informed PA" plan to support the grassroots efforts grounded by United Way and our partners over the past decade. As a state-wide priority, United Way supporters have the amazing opportunity to tackle one of the most critical chronic health challenges of our time. In March 2021, with our support, United Way of PA launched Resilient PA to help mobilize, educate and advocate to help create the policies needed to support and sustain trauma-informed care with public resources. By expanding trauma-informed funding to include public resources, in addition to private philanthropies, we are one step closer to a holistic understanding of supporting those impacted by trauma.

YOUR SUPPORT MATTERS

Through continued support, constant innovation and ground-level advocacy, we can break the cycle of trauma. Ten years ago, "trauma-informed" was not a commonly used term. Today, our region is better positioned to reduce the pressure of trauma as a step in dismantling poverty. Supporting United Way helps our region prevent, mitigate and address trauma so we can heal and thrive together.

THANK YOU

Special acknowledgment to Carole Haas Gravagno, United Way supporter, for her leadership role in investing in our Trauma-Informed work.



If it wasn't for United Way, coming into Delaware county and us sharing all of this knowledge and resources with the other counties in the state, I don't know where everyone would be... **but, there has been such tremendous growth in understanding trauma, and training families and youth and our stakeholders in understanding trauma...** it has been a great, great time to be here, in Pennsylvania.

SHANNON THOMAS
DELCO SYSTEM OF CARE COORDINATOR

¹ Understanding - What Is Trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences, Providence of BC, YouTube, July 24 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRxiue4Ms3s

² "What Is Trauma? - Trauma-Informed Care Implementation Resource Center." Trauma, March 30 2020, www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma/

³ "Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences | Violence Prevention | Injury Center| CDC." Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, November 5 2019, www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/fastfact.html

⁴ What Is Trauma-Informed Care?, Center for Health Care Strategies, YouTube, January 20 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWken5DsJcw