

RAISING THE BAR: MAKING
A CASE FOR TRAUMA
INFORMED PRACTICE AND
CREATING A CULTURE OF
HEALING

Hon. Michael Key

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Questionnaire

Finding your ACE Score ra hbr 10 24 06

While you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life:

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...
Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
or
Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

2. Did a parent or other adult in the household **often** ...
Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
or
Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you **ever**...
Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
or
Try to or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

4. Did you **often** feel that ...
No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
or
Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

5. Did you **often** feel that ...
You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
or
Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

6. Were your parents **ever** separated or divorced?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

7. Was your mother or stepmother:
Often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
or
Sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
or
Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic or who used street drugs?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill or did a household member attempt suicide?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

10. Did a household member go to prison?
Yes No If yes enter 1 _____

Now add up your "Yes" answers: _____ This is your ACE Score

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Is Doing Justice Really Enough?

By. R. Michael Key, Judge, Juvenile Court of Troup County, Georgia

When I became a juvenile court judge in 1989, I thought my charge was simply to do justice, to embrace the mantra of justice for all without regard for the person and without favor or retribution, a noble and challenging calling in and of itself. Somewhere along the way, I have come to realize, as fulfilling and important as that charge might be, doing justice while resolving specific disputes between parties does little to address the collateral damage inherent in our court system's adversarial process, and even less to help the parties and their families heal from the damaging life experiences they brought into that process. Knowing now what we know about trauma, I have come to understand and accept that my charge as a judge, and our charge as stakeholders in the judicial system, is the greater responsibility of doing justice and promoting healing, healing among those we serve, among those who serve with us, and within ourselves.

Meeting our own needs and the needs of those we serve begins with creating a culture of well-being, of healing, where all people who enter our court feel physically and psychologically safe and valued. In creating this culture, it is important to understand that in the world in which we operate, reality often takes a back seat to perception. For the people we serve, their perception is their reality and their reality drives their behavior and impacts how they respond to us, to the court process, to treatment, and to everything else going on around them. We have to accept and value them for who they are and we have to demonstrate that to them. By doing so, we can create an environment they perceive to be physically and psychologically safe, where they feel valued. Creating that culture requires getting buy-in from all staff and relevant stakeholders and begins at the front door.

First impressions are extremely important and "beginning at the front door" includes the people and the physical environment. Some years ago, I presented at the ER with chest pains and pain radiating down my left arm. When I approached the first service window I saw and was asked, "Could I help you," I described my condition as I have described it here, to which the lady replied in a monotone voice, legs swinging slowly in and out of the knee space of the desk on which she was sitting, "Next window." Not the best response to a patient who a few minutes later would be nearing death. Yet how many times do we create that same impression by calling the "next case" with little regard for the parties in the previous case? The front door is not limited to the physical door that is the entryway to our buildings. The front door may be on the phone, through electronic communication, or in schools, in service provider offices, in lawyer's offices, in homes, at the police department, or anywhere in the community where that first contact is made. Understanding that the first person people see in most courthouses is an armed deputy and the first thing they see is a metal detector makes it even more important for the people and the physical environment beyond the metal detector to be welcoming and, to the extent possible, calming.

Once the people we serve are in the door, the next step is to engage them. Engagement is easier for some people than for others, and the reality is we cannot always get everyone to engage. What is important is to consistently give people a meaningful opportunity to do so. Too many times we see parents and children treated as the subject matter of the proceeding rather than as equal partners in the process. Too often their lawyers do not even give them the opportunity to speak in hearings or reviews. Parents and children should not lose their voice simply because they have issues that have to be dealt with in our courts and related systems. The voice of our foster care alumni group, EmpowerMENT, "Nothing about us without us," rings as true for parents as it does for children. Except where Fifth Amendment issues are involved, parents should be encouraged to speak out in court in an appropriate way and what they have to say should be heard and valued whether it is what we want to hear or not. And in my view, engagement promotes empowerment. Parents and children should be empowered to participate in decision making, often restoring a power that has been lost long before they were even known to the court system.

What we may not focus on enough is hope. When the people we serve lose hope, which many times is all some have left, failure is all but guaranteed. We have to plant seeds of hope in all we do and in all we say, even when accompanied by appropriate accountability. Those seeds can be planted in a number of ways, even in the physical environment. Turn dark into light whenever possible. Open the blinds and let the light in for goodness sake! You will be amazed how much difference it can make in how people feel.


At some point, you just have to dive in and get it done. We are becoming a trauma responsive court piece by piece and we are learning lessons along the way. If we wait until we have it all figured out, we will have spent too much of our time at the starting gate. If you decide to dive in, do it with the commitment I penned some years ago, "Doing for the children and families we serve that which we would want others to do for us and our families if we found ourselves in like circumstance."

Coach Kirby Smart says, "If you get the culture right, everything else takes care of itself." While conceding that the culture does not always take care of everything, we do know that it is extremely important in addressing past harm, minimizing future harm, and setting the stage for resolution and recovery. And, as the late Chief Justice P. Harris Hines, another hero of mine said and lived, "Be kind for everyone has his troubles."

Thanks to the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges ("NCJFCJ"), the National Child Traumatic Stress Network ("NCTSN"), the Barton Child Law and Policy Center, and the Georgia Child Welfare Training Collaborative for their support of our work. Our trauma journey began following a presentation from Dr. Shawn Marsh at an NCJFCJ annual conference, followed a few months later by a "trauma audit" by NCJFCJ, and most recently brought more into focus by participation as a pilot court for the Trauma Informed Care Self-Assessment developed by the NCTSN with the support of NCJFCJ.

This article is adapted from the Foreword to an implementation guide being developed in the Troup County Juvenile Court entitled "Becoming a Need-Centered and Trauma-Responsive Court" with the focus of this article being becoming trauma responsive.

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IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"Somehow the idea that we are human just as they are human has to come across, or they will never treat us humanely."

Ann Jaskins, PhD
www.thiscourtside.org

EC

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Raising the Bar:

Making a Case for Trauma-Informed Practice and Creating a Culture of Healing

Presenter:
Honorable R. Michael Key
Troup County Juvenile Court

ICJC State Court Judges'
Fall Conference
October 16-18, 2019

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*Make a difference...
be a safe harbor*

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Understand trauma and its impact on individuals, families, and communities
- Understand how professionals in the court system can re-traumatize the people they serve
- Learn practical tips for courtroom management and proceedings that minimize additional harm
- Identify next steps toward creating a culture of healing

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UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

"Experiencing, witnessing, anticipating, or being confronted with an event or events that pose a real or perceived threat of death or serious injury to the physical integrity or sanity of one's self or others".



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TRAUMA...



...A NORMAL RESPONSE TO AN ABNORMAL SITUATION

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When one perceives a threat, the body activates the stress response system. The stress response occurs in both the body and brain.

Of immediate importance is survival.

FIGHT



FLIGHT



OR

FREEZE



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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Emotional abuse
- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional neglect
- Physical neglect

Household Dysfunction:

- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation/divorce
- Incarcerated household member



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Other Sources of Ongoing Stress


People who have been traumatized frequently face other sources of ongoing stress that can challenge our ability to intervene. Some of those sources of stress are:

- Poverty
- Discrimination
- Separation from parent/siblings/children
- Frequent moves
- School problems
- Juvenile and criminal involvement
- Chronic medical conditions
- Traumatic grief or loss
- Refugee or immigration experiences



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Almost all people experience acute distress immediately after exposure to a traumatic life event,
but....
 Most return to prior levels of functioning with time and *support* from *family and trusted adults*.



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When Traumatic Experiences Become Toxic = Complex Trauma

- Stress response system is *chronically* activated
- Multiple, *chronic and prolonged*, exposure to adverse events without *adequate supportive relationships*
- Often of an *interpersonal nature* with early life onset
- Disruption* of primary attachments
- Effects are *cumulative*
- Damaging effects* on learning, behavior, and health *across the lifespan*

Prolonged exposure to repetitive or severe events such as child abuse is likely to cause the most severe and lasting effects.

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea.

For a person with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), however, these feelings continue and even increase, becoming so strong that they keep the person from living a normal life. People with PTSD have symptoms for longer than one month and cannot function as well as before the event occurred.

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Variability in Responses to Traumatic Events

<p>The impact of a potentially traumatic event depends on several factors, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The meaning or perception one gives to the event ▪ The actual nature of the event ▪ Personal characteristics ▪ Whether one was the victim or a witness ▪ The relationship to the victim or perpetrator ▪ Past experience(s) with trauma 	<p>Resiliency Factors that can offset the impact:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Personal coping skills ▪ The presence/availability of adults who can offer help and protection
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Adverse Childhood Experiences have a tremendous impact on future violence victimization and perpetration and lifelong health and opportunity.

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A Damaged Worldview


"We Don't See Things As They Are."
"We See Them As We Are." - AN

Trauma changes the way you see the world, including your view of yourself and your place in that world

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What The Data Tells Us

- ▶ The majority of adults and children in psychiatric treatment settings have trauma histories
- ▶ A sizable percentage of people with substance use disorders have traumatic stress symptoms that interfere with achieving or maintaining sobriety
- ▶ A sizable percentage of adults and children in the court systems have trauma histories
- ▶ As one's ACE Score Increases, the Risk of Suicide Increases



Wolfe, WPC, Quirk et al., Meyer et al., 1998, Equino et al., 1998, NASADPPD, 1990

www.TheNationalCovenant.org


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Why Understanding Trauma is Imperative:

- Trauma's impact is broad and diverse
- Trauma's impact is deep and life-shaping
- Trauma, especially interpersonal violence and trans-generational transmission, is self-perpetuating
- Trauma is insidious and differentially affects the more vulnerable
- Trauma affects how people approach services
- Service systems have often been re-traumatizing

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So What's the Real Story?



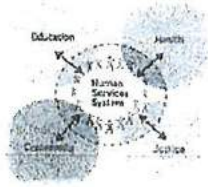
- ← What brought them into the court system
- ← What happened before that caused them to be here

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Those We Serve

People who enter facilities, courts, and other social service environments are frequently society's most vulnerable.

They enter expecting help, understanding, and comfort but often find rigid rules, humiliating procedures, conflicting and often disempowering methods, and inconsistent, confusing and judgmental explanatory systems. (Lundberg, 1982)



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Remember...

It's not about us....

It's about them!

Or is it?



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A Parallel Process:



Judges and courtroom staff may have similar adverse experiences in their background as those of the defendants, witnesses, and victims before them, and they may be more or less recognized or worked through.


When judges and court room staff suffer physical and psychological injuries from clients' trauma reactions, they can become demoralized and hostile.

Counter-aggressive responses create punitive environments that are not conducive to healing.

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The Ripple Effect

Trauma is a pervasive, long-lasting public health issue that affects not only individuals but entire organizations and systems.



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A System Under Siege:



- Change Resistant
- Reactive
- Coercive
- Hierarchal
- Punitive

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What this May Look Like:



What's wrong with you?


- Children, youth and families are seen as broken, vulnerable, and unable to make decisions for themselves
- The impact of trauma is not well understood by court staff and providers
- Problems and symptoms are viewed as discrete, separate, and often unrelated to past experiences with trauma
- Deficit-based provider driven

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Providers view themselves as the experts who know what is best for clients	Practices are not conducive to recovery and have the potential to cause additional harm (re-traumatization)	What passes as treatment may be little more than labeling, the prescription of medication, and behavioral "management"
Blame individuals for their failure to comply, despite the shortcomings in the services provided	Fragmented system for delivery of services (social service fragmentation)	Power sharing is limited

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A trauma informed culture is about...




people and places.

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**Systemic Re-Traumatization:
A Mirror of Past Experience**

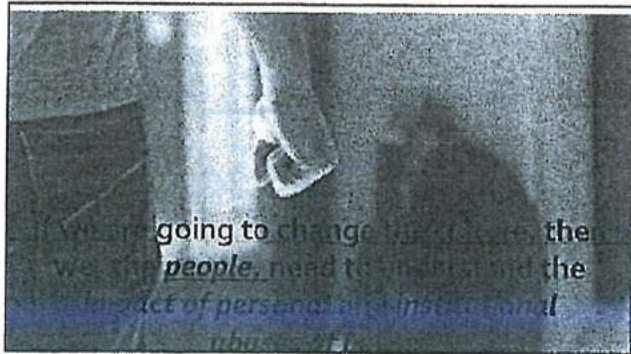
A conscious or unconscious reminder of past trauma that results in a re-experiencing of the initial trauma event. It can be triggered by a situation, an attitude or expression, or by certain environments that replicate the dynamics (loss of power/control/safety) of the original trauma.

- Can be obvious - or not so obvious
- Is usually unintentional
- Is always hurtful - exacerbating the very symptoms that brought the person into services



Jan Jennings, PhD
www.TheTraumaToolbox.org

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**The Counter-culture:
Traumatic Experiences Replicated in Organizations and Systems:**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Betrayed ▪ Unheard and Uninformed ▪ Objectified ▪ Isolated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Labeled ▪ Controlled/Powerless ▪ No Privacy or Boundaries
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Ann Aronson, PhD
www.TheAbuseInstitute.org
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BETRAYED

Previous Trauma	Experience Replicated
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Violated by trusted caretaker or relative. ▪ Those who knew of abuse did not tell. Priority was to protect self, family, relationships, and reputations ▪ Abusive disciplinary interventions were "for their own good". ▪ Family relationships fragmented by separation, divorce, abandonment, substance abuse, etc. Connections broken. Learns not to trust or depend on others as trustworthy. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sexually assaulted by staff while incarcerated. ▪ Priority is to protect the institution, jobs, and reputations. ▪ Hurtful or unwanted interventions presented as "for their own good". ▪ Relationships of trust arbitrarily disrupted based on needs of the system, shift changes, staff turnover, limits of insurance coverage. No continuity of care or caregiver. Ability to trust is further compromised.

Ann Aronson, PhD
www.TheAbuseInstitute.org

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BETRAYED
In Their Own Words
Anna and Zoe

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Unheard, Uninformed, Not Believed

<p>Previous Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attempts to communicate abuse were unheard, disbelieved, ignored, misunderstood. • "I don't matter" 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On cross examination, repeatedly told, "you are not telling the truth, you made this up" • The Judge accepts a plea that does not appear to be consistent with the evidence, the defendants own description of the event, or in his or her own best interests • Questions about case are met with answers in legal jargon that cannot be understood. • "I don't matter"
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Unheard, Uninformed, Not Believed
In Their Own Words
Jeanette, Horace and Jason

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Objectified

<p>Previous Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Viewed and treated by perpetrator solely as an object for his use ▪ Not seen or experienced as a whole person capable of experiencing hurt ▪ Perpetrator was not capable of feeling empathy for what victim was experiencing 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Viewed as a "process" or case number. ▪ Seen only in their role as "sick", broken or something that needed to be managed or fixed. Clients personal history and lived experiences of traumas not viewed as core to their distress. ▪ Ability to be empathic limited by narrow view of client which excludes client's history of violence and abuse and the pain they feel as a result.
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Ann Jennings, PhD
www.TheAnnieVictims.org

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Objectified

In Their Own Words
Jill and Elizabeth

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Isolated

<p>Previous Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Taken by abuser to places hidden from others ▪ Child isolated in her experience, "Why just me?" Belief she alone was singled out, is different from all others. Child thought she was the only one in the world to be abused ▪ Child lost most of his ability to hear from a significant blunt force injury to the head while trying to protect his mother from physical abuse at the hands of her boyfriend 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Separated from community in locked facilities. Forced into seclusion room. In community, isolated from others by living conditions, effects of medication, and stigma. ▪ No inquiry or discussion with clients about their childhood or adult trauma experiences. No one talks openly or educates clients about the prevalence and impact of trauma. Client is left isolated and alone with the experience. ▪ Hearing accommodations are not provided to client. Client is not able to participate fully or meaningfully in treatment and court proceedings. Isolated in his experience.
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Ann Jennings, PhD
www.TheAnnieVictims.org

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Isolated
In Their Own Words
Luis and Jackie

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Labeled

<p>Childhood Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Child was left with a feeling of being "bad" and thought of themselves as a "bad seed", defective in a fundamental way. ▪ Cause of child's "acting out" or unusual behaviors seen as something inherently wrong with the child. Child labeled "difficult to handle". Impact of trauma and environmental factors not considered. ▪ Appropriate anger at abuse seen as something wrong with child. Abuse continued. 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Judge says in court, "Your test came back dirty", "You're dirty", "There is something wrong with me". ▪ Client's emotions and behaviors are labeled manipulative, attention seeking, "non-compliant", and "treatment resistant". Impact of trauma and environmental factors not considered. ▪ Appropriate anger at hurtful institutional and community mental health practices judged pathological. Practices continued.
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Ann Leverage, PhD
www.TheLabeledOne.org

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Labeled
In Their Own Words
Mindy, Eric and Cheryl

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Controlled/Powerless

<p>Previous Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Perpetrator had absolute power and control over child. Fear of not being believed or of retaliation, if reported. • Pleas to stop the violation were ignored. Perpetrator ignored child's cries of pain and continued to hurt them. • Child dependent on the family or caregiver who was the abuser. 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A judge asks a participant to explain her behavior or the impact of abuse without acknowledging the fact the abuser is in the courtroom. Intimidation or fear of abusers and retaliation not considered nor the reluctance to share information in front of family members or others who do not believe them. • Pleas and cries to stop abusive treatment, restraint, seclusion, overmedication are ignored. Fear of not being believed or of retaliation, if reported. • Kept dependent on system. Strengths, talents, competencies not nurtured. No education provided. No skill development to live and work independently in the community.
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www.theabusestore.org

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Controlled/Powerless

In Their Own Words
Chrystal, Bob, and Tammy

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**No Privacy,
Boundaries Or Safe Place**

<p>Previous Trauma</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy rights and emotional and physical boundaries were grossly violated by perpetrator. Body, room, and home were entered against will. • Felt exposed and vulnerable to harm at any time. No safe place even in their own home or room 	<p>Experience Replicated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching and body contact, without permission. • Client stripped of clothing when searched, secluded or restrained, often by or in presence of male attendants. • Inadequate privacy for bathing, dressing, or using toilet • Having police or security guard outside seclusion room with no explanation • Perpetrators and victims are placed in the same groups, day programs, group homes, or waiting areas
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www.theabusestore.org

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**No Privacy,
Boundaries Or Safe Place**

In Their Own Words
Trish and Billy

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The research tells us that when the public feels that they don't have a voice in the process or understand their basic rights, they are less likely to comply with what the system asks of them. And they are less likely to obey the law going forward. The system, in effect, is setting itself up for future bad outcomes.

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**The Next
Steps:**

MOVING
beyond good intentions

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First... "Do No Additional Harm"

As an extension of this principle—and in recognition of the unfortunate prevalence of trauma in the lives of individuals and families—concerted efforts are made to ensure that policies and practices are safe for those who are intended to benefit from them.

People should not be worse off as a result of accessing care or suffer adverse effects from receiving treatments or participating in services.



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**DON'T BE A SPECTATOR.
BE THE CHANGE YOU
WISH TO SEE IN YOUR
ORGANISATION.**

vincent magno

www.smetelby.si.com


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"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet." Rachel Remen

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Sometimes we need a little wake up call

We don't consider how the interaction, or repeated interactions with those who have experienced trauma impacts us and our ability to cope.




We are experts in identifying an individual in crisis, or the effects of exposure to trauma...in others

Where we fall short is in our own recognition.

Even scarier, our lack of willingness to seek help.

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In Their Own Words: Trauma-Informed Care



"During every incarceration, every institutionalization, every court-ordered drug treatment program, it was always the same: I was always treated like a hopeless case. All people could see was the way I looked or the way I smelled. It wasn't until I finally entered a recovery-oriented, trauma informed treatment program a little more than four years ago, where I felt safe and respected, that I could begin to heal...Someone finally asked me 'What happened to you?' instead of 'What's wrong with you?'" Taylor Cain

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Antidotes to Systemic Re-Traumatization



Safety

Trustworthiness and Transparency

Empowerment, Voice, and Choice

Collaboration and Mutuality

Peer Support

Strength-Based

Culturally, Historically, and Gender Sensitive

Recovery and Success for trauma survivors is largely based on their ability to regain control of their lives.

Jill Koenig, PhD
www.traumainformed.org

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Promoting a Culture of Healing:

On an **interpersonal level**: it's about how much eye contact you make, the tone you greet people with, and the communication skills your clerks have, for example.

On a **procedural level**: court forms are easy to use, a help center is available to guide people through the system, there is a court user feedback mechanism, and accessible facilities.

We have to provide a neutral and professional forum for justice that operates on both of those levels.

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People Promoting a Culture of Healing

- Raise awareness, train regularly and be responsive
- Get buy-in from staff and stakeholders
- Set the tone
- Implement the Universal Precautions Approach
- Engage everyone – voice, choice and transparency
- Colloquy
- Utilize the "Four Cores"
- Refer to people by who they are not what they are
- Accept people's perception as their reality



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Promoting a Culture of Healing: Reconstruct the Physical Environment

- Set reasonable expectations, communicate them and believe in them
- Identify and meet needs
- Celebrate the small victories and understand that for many people success is merely avoiding failure
- Ambassadors
- Law enforcement trained in trauma
- Build support systems
- Be sincere/be real
- Promote hope



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**Promoting a Culture of Healing:
Reconstruct the Physical Environment**

- Welcoming
- Keep the temperature comfortable
- Meet physical and emotional needs
- Appropriate waiting rooms- Have separate waiting rooms for alleged perpetrator and trauma survivor
- Open the blinds and let some light in
- Eliminate the indiscriminate shackling of children and adults
- Limit loud noises
- Avoid practices in court that suggest an un-level playing field
- Nutritional snacks
- Informational folders and calendars

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Promoting a Culture of Healing: Reconstruct the Physical Environment



- Remove confusing signage**
Ensure it's not overly negative
Gender-neutral
Available in languages other than English
- Accessibility**
Clearly designate handicap-accessible entrances and elevators. Ensure that oral and written instructions have ADA compliant versions for the visually and hearing impaired
- Eliminate clutter**
For Juvenile and dependency courts, create a youth-friendly environment
Smaller, lower ceilings, more colorful
Children's reading areas

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Places (and Things) Promoting a Culture of Healing, Continued

- Inspirational messaging
- Wristbands: "Be Positive Be Strong #Believe"
- Be respectful




- Respect personal space
- Promote predictability
- Handle with Care

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Courtroom Management Tips

Post clear courtroom rules

- Rules should be simple, clearly posted, and consistent throughout the courthouse.
- Efforts should be made to use respectful language.
- Whenever possible, rules should be communicated in images and words, using Spanish or other common secondary languages as needed.
- Court staff should enforce rules using a respectful tone of voice

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Courtroom Management Tips

Explain the reason for late starts

- Court sessions should begin promptly at the time scheduled to demonstrate respect for everyone's time.
- Thank audience members for being on time. If court does not start on time, court staff should tell the audience the reason for the delay and the anticipated start time

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Courtroom Management Tips

Explain the order in which cases will be called

- Giving information about the order in which cases will be called demonstrates respect for those who are waiting, including friends and family who are hoping to see a detained defendant.
- Consider explaining why certain cases are called first to reduce the risk that the practice will be perceived as showing favoritism or bias

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PRACTICAL TIPS FOR COURTROOM PROCEEDINGS

Introduce yourself

Judges should introduce themselves at the beginning of proceedings

Explain the court process and how decisions are made and use plain language

The purpose of each appearance should be explained in plain language. The defendant should be informed if and when she will have an opportunity to speak and ask questions. Judges and attorneys should demonstrate neutrality by explaining in plain language what factors will be considered before a decision is made. Minimize legal jargon or acronyms so that defendants can follow the conversation.

Make eye contact

Eye contact from an authority figure is perceived as a sign of respect. Try to make eye contact when speaking and listening. Consider other body language that might demonstrate that you are listening and engaged. Be conscious of court users' body language, too, looking for signs of nervousness or frustration. Be aware that court users who avoid making eye contact with you may be from a culture where eye contact with authority figures is perceived to be disrespectful

Ask open-ended questions

Find opportunities to invite the defendant to tell his/her side of the story, whether directly or via defense counsel. Use open-ended questions to invite more than a simple "yes" or "no" response. Judges should warn litigants that they may need to interrupt them to keep the court proceeding moving forward

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Keep In Mind:

- This may be the most important contact with the court system the parties will ever have.
- Filling out forms on the bench may be important, but eye contact and engagement with the parties are critical.
- Trust is not a given. But it can be gained in each hearing
- People make assumptions when they lack knowledge. Explain things.
- Listening is a key skill. Decision acceptance is greater if it's clear you listened—note their key points when ruling.
- Like others, judges can be affected by perceptions, assumptions, and stereotypes—in other words, implicit biases. Be aware.

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"At the end of the day, we're in the human interaction business".

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In Memory of Anna Caroline Jennings
(1960-1992)

- All artwork in this presentation was created by Anna Caroline Jennings. Although she had no formal training, her work is stark, sophisticated and haunting. It has been exhibited at conferences across the country.
- Through her paintings and drawings she vividly and poignantly expresses her abuse at the hands of perpetrators and within the mental health system.
- Her work and story are displayed on the website: www.TheAnnaInstitute.org

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For More Information:

Judge R. Michael Key
Troup County Juvenile Court
Email: mkey@troupc.org
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**Be kind...
... for everyone
has his troubles.**

**THE LATE CHIEF JUSTICE
P. HARRIS HINES –
KIND, LOVING AND A
DAMN GOOD DAWG!**

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