Trauma-Sensitive School Checklist

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Center for Special Education

Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative
of Massachusetts Advocates for Children
and the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School

This checklist is organized by five components involved in creating a trauma-sensitive school. Each component consists of several elements. Please assess your school on each element according to the following scale:

1 Element is **not at all** in place

2 Element is **partially** in place

3 Element is **mostly** in place

4 Element is **fully** in place

School _____ Date _____

Team Members (name and position)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A trauma-sensitive school is a safe and respectful environment that enables students to build caring relationships with adults and peers, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and succeed academically, while supporting their physical health and well-being.

School-wide Policies and Practices

1 2 3 4 • School contains predictable and safe environments (including classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and school bus) that are attentive to transitions and sensory needs.

1 2 3 4 • Leadership (including principal and/or superintendent) develops and implements a trauma-sensitive action plan, identifies barriers to progress, and evaluates success.

1 2 3 4 • General and special educators consider the role that trauma may be playing in learning difficulties at school.

1 2 3 4 • Discipline policies balance accountability with an understanding of trauma.

1 2 3 4 • Support for staff is available on a regular basis, including supervision and/or consultation with a trauma expert, classroom observations, and opportunities for team work.

1 2 3 4 • Opportunities exist for confidential discussion about students.

1 2 3 4 • School participates in safety planning, including enforcement of court orders, transferring records safely, restricting access to student-record information, and sensitive handling of reports of suspected incidents of abuse or neglect (51As).

1 2 3 4 • On-going professional development opportunities occur as determined by staff needs assessments.

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Classroom Strategies and Techniques

- 1 2 3 4 • Expectations are communicated in clear, concise, and positive ways, and goals for achievement of students affected by traumatic experiences are consistent with the rest of the class.
- 1 2 3 4 • Students' strengths and interests are encouraged and incorporated.
- 1 2 3 4 • Activities are structured in predictable and emotionally safe ways.
- 1 2 3 4 • Opportunities exist for students to learn and practice regulation of emotions and modulation of behaviors.
- 1 2 3 4 • Classrooms employ positive supports for behavior.
- 1 2 3 4 • Information is presented and learning is assessed using multiple modes.
- 1 2 3 4 • Opportunities exist for learning how to interact effectively with others.
- 1 2 3 4 • Opportunities exist for learning how to plan and follow through on assignments.

Collaborations and Linkages with Mental Health

- 1 2 3 4 • Policies describe how, when, and where to refer families for mental health supports; and staff actively facilitate and follow through in supporting families' access to trauma-competent mental health services.
- 1 2 3 4 • Access exists to trauma-competent services for prevention, early intervention, treatment, and crisis intervention.
- 1 2 3 4 • Protocols exist for helping students transition back to school from other placements.
- 1 2 3 4 • Mental health services are linguistically appropriate and culturally competent.
- 1 2 3 4 • Staff has regular opportunities for assistance from mental health providers in responding appropriately and confidentially to families.

Family Partnerships

- 1 2 3 4 • Staff uses a repertoire of skills to actively engage and build positive relationships with families.
- 1 2 3 4 • Strategies to involve parents are tailored to meet individual family needs, and include flexibility in selecting times and places for meetings, availability of interpreters, and translated materials.
- 1 2 3 4 • All communications with and regarding families respect the bounds of confidentiality.

Community Linkages

- 1 2 3 4 • School develops and maintains ongoing partnerships with local Departments of Social Services, Mental Health, and Mental Retardation and with community-based agencies to facilitate access to resources.
- 1 2 3 4 • When possible, school and community agencies leverage funding to increase the array of supports available.