

Turning the TIDE: Project Description

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP)

What is trauma?

Trauma results from experiences that overwhelm a person's capacity to cope. People who have experiences of trauma, such as childhood abuse or neglect, sexual assault, torture, accidents, war, migration or displacement are especially vulnerable to heightened effects of violence, and have negative responses to certain approaches to service delivery. Experiences of trauma are linked to difficulty with trust and relationships, which affects service access and engagement and fear of sharing their health, trauma and/or violence concerns.

Service providers who work with women who have experienced violence and trauma are at risk of vicarious (secondary) trauma, compassion fatigue and burnout. Both individual and organizational characteristics have been associated with vicarious and secondary trauma. Organizational issues that have been associated with vicarious trauma include: workload, availability of group support for workers, supervision, opportunities for self-care, and education.

What is trauma informed practice?

Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) is a whole system approach to service provision, which is based on an understanding that many forms of violence and trauma are common and there are a wide range of ways people cope. TIP is ***not*** about treating trauma, but instead trauma-informed services take into account an understanding of trauma in all aspects of service delivery and prioritizes safety, choice and control.

TIP works at the client, staff, agency and system levels from the core principles of trauma awareness, safety and trustworthiness, choice and collaboration, and building of strength and skills. Trauma-informed practice is more about the overall essence of the approach, or way of working, than a specific treatment strategy or method.

Developing a Trauma Informed Practice Culture

Project Aim

This project will enhance the awareness, skills and practices of the Association's service staff, leadership, and program partners, build professional capacity to deliver trauma-informed services and create a whole organizational cultural shift toward TIP across 12 sites of direct service at YWCA Toronto.

This project will develop resources, education and a framework for organizational change related to integrating TIP for YWCA Toronto's clients, staff, managers and directors and program partners. The

focus will be on creating health promoting program shifts that promote the use of trauma-informed information, resources, and programs in ways that take into account the violence and trauma that many of the YWCA clients and staff have experienced.

Rationale

The majority of women who access YWCA programs have experienced violence and trauma issues either in their past or concurrently. In addition to women and children supported by violence-specific programs, this also includes those addressing housing, employment and homelessness issues. There is a need for consistent and widespread training, information and organizational changes related to the Association's response to violence and trauma experienced by clients, and trauma (both vicarious and primary) among staff.

This project responds to the need for a consistent trauma-informed approach within YWCA Toronto, supporting a whole system shift to a trauma-informed model of service delivery. It is critical that all staff, leadership and management of the Association have a shared understanding of trauma, trauma informed care principles, and tools and materials to support implementation of trauma-informed principles and practices within all programs and services.

Project Activities

For this four-year project, YWCA Toronto has partnered with the Centre of Excellence for Women's Health to:

1. **Baseline scan existing practices, policies, knowledge and attitudes** related to TIP at YWCA Toronto
 - Interviews with managers, directors and program partners
 - Surveys with all staff (online)
 - Surveys with some clients
 - Review of existing policies
2. **Establish collaborative learning mechanisms** to engage YWCA staff, managers and directors across the Association, and our key partner organizations with whom we will co learn, create a plan for policy and program design, articulate training needs, and reflect on project findings
3. Develop **resources and training materials**
4. Develop a **framework for organizational change** to guide an organizational shift to support the adoption of TIP through the entire program of service delivery across YWCA sites
5. Provide **training** to all staff and partners
6. **Evaluate** outcomes of training
7. **Share project findings** through meetings with YWCA Canada and other multiservice organizations