

SUPPORTIVE RESPONSE TO YOUTH AND FAMILIES

For support staff, security, transportation and others who interact with children and youth

Support personnel can often be the first contact with children and families across work settings. It's extremely important to be compassionate and empathetic in all interactions, even when challenging behaviors are present. It's natural to have reactions or make assumptions about how a child is behaving, but remain mindful that we don't know what that child is going through.

TRAUMA

The National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) defines trauma as a frightening, dangerous, or violent event that threatens the life or bodily integrity of the child or child's loved one.

Seeing a child's behavior is like only seeing the tip of the iceberg. Remember there is more going on beneath the surface that you are not aware of.

Subjective: A traumatic event can impact everyone differently. What may be traumatic for one, may not be for another.

Pervasive: A traumatic event can elicit strong emotions and physical reactions that persist after the traumatic event is over.

Adversive: Traumatic events can impact healthy functioning. Trauma can interfere with learning, relationships and view of self and the world.



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA SYMPTOMS

KIDS WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED TRAUMA MAY DISPLAY THESE BEHAVIORS

- Intense and ongoing emotional upset
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Anger, irritability
- Difficulty with peers and forming relationships
- Attention and academic difficulties
- Fight, flight, freeze responses (combative, running, spacing out/numbing)
- Physical complaints, aches and pains
- Difficulty eating/sleeping (nightmares)

CARING ADULTS CAN HELP

- 1) Take a deep breath to calm yourself when interacting with an escalated or distressed child. Children need adults to help them regulate emotions, so staying calm is critical.
- 2) Use a soft, calm, caring tone of voice when interacting with an escalated or distressed child. Let them know you have intentions to understand and help. You can also mimic a child's body language to send a message that you are present with them in the moment.
- 3) Get support from a team member if you're overwhelmed or having difficulty with remaining calm.

RESOURCES

- **Detroit Wayne Integrated Health Network for referrals and intake at 1-(800)-241-4949; TTY: 1-(800)-870-2599**
- **Detroit Wayne Connect Training, Suggested Topics: Trauma 101, Mental Health First Aid, Cultural Competence, Crisis Pre-Intervention Using Verbal De-Escalation**
- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)**
- **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)-Infographic:<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/infographics/the-truth-about-aces.html>**
- **www.recognizetrauma.org**
- **www.resiliencetrumpsaces.org**

STRENGTHS-BASED AND SUPPORTIVE

It's imperative to keep a positive view of the child even amidst challenges. Kids who have experienced trauma are more likely to have a negative self-image and need adults to help build healthy self-esteem. Instead of labeling a youth "argumentative," focus on seeing the strength by thinking they are a self-advocate and communicator.

NON-JUDGEMENTAL

It's easy to misinterpret behaviors as offensive or off-putting, but approach the youth from a place of compassion. Youth who have experienced trauma can have difficulty trusting others. A non-judgemental approach will help build trust, so you can provide support more effectively.

**I AM MORE
THAN WHAT
YOU SEE**

