

Information April 2017 bulletin

Victim Services and Crime Prevention

Victim Services and
Crime Prevention
Community Safety and
Crime Prevention Branch
Ministry of Public Safety and
Solicitor General



Focus on Trauma Informed Practice

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Message from the Executive Director

Trauma informed practice is quickly becoming recognized as an essential approach for working with victims and survivors of crime. At British Columbia's Fifth Justice Summit in November 2015, trauma informed practice was identified as an important aspect of enhancing justice system responses to victims of violence. In 2016, B.C. embarked on a five year project to develop and implement a cross-sector, trauma informed practice training, education, and awareness curriculum for the justice and public safety sector with financial support from Department of Justice Canada. In March 2017, B.C. held its first Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Symposium for Justice, Public Safety and Anti-Violence Community Sectors (see page 4) and work on furthering

trauma informed approaches is underway.

In this bulletin, you will find:

- an article on trauma informed approaches to supporting victims of violence (see page 2);
- practice tips on working in a trauma informed way (page 3);
- details about an upcoming workshop with Dr. Lori Haskell on trauma informed practice (page 3);
- highlights from the 2017 TIP Symposium (page 4);
- information about the 2017 Community Safety and Crime Prevention Award nominations (page 4);
- particulars about the BC Victims of Homicide's Voices in the Courtroom project (page 5);

- news on the Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference;
- information about testimonial accommodations and assistive equipment (page 5); as well as
- Links to online training for service providers.

I'm happy to hear your thoughts on trauma informed practice and other issues. Feel free to contact me directly with your comments and feedback at marcie.mezzarobba@gov.bc.ca.

Marcie Mezzarobba
Executive Director

Trauma Informed Approaches to Supporting Victims of Violence

Source: *Victims of Crime Research Digest No. 9*. Department of Justice Canada, 2016. Reproduced with the permission of the Department of Justice Canada, 2017.

The traumatic impacts of violence have long-term effects on victims, whether the violence is ongoing or in the past. Trauma-informed approaches are practices regarding the provision of services and programming that—particularly when they are also violence-informed—work to minimize harm to victims of violence, and aid healing and justice.

Understanding trauma

In the context of violence, trauma can be acute (resulting from a single event) or complex (resulting from repeated experiences of interpersonal and/or systemic violence). Trauma can alter human neurobiology: brain and nervous-system function change. While neurobiological changes are not necessarily permanent, they can be long-lasting if not addressed appropriately.

Neurobiological changes resulting from trauma can alter behaviour in both children and adults (Green et al. 2015). For example, adverse events in childhood, such as various forms of maltreatment, along with exposure to intimate-partner

violence or alcoholism, can have long-term neurobiological effects and are associated with a wide range of negative outcomes, including stress, anxiety, depression and substance use (Anda et al. 2006¹; Felitti and Anda 2010²; Cloitre et al. 2009³). In trauma informed approaches, those who provide support services understand that any person they encounter may have experienced violence with traumatic effects. They understand that emotional states (such as depression, anxiety, anger, dissociation, difficulty concentrating, fear and distractedness) and behaviours (such as substance use, compulsive and obsessive behaviours, disordered eating, self-harm, high-risk sexual behaviours, suicidal behaviours or isolation) may arise, at least in part, from those experiences.

Trauma and violence informed approaches: Principles and strategies

Trauma and violence-informed approaches aim to transform practices based on an understanding of the impact of trauma and violence on victims' lives and behaviours. The following table outlines key principles and sample implementation strategies at service-provider levels that can be used in many different sectors.

Principles	Individual/Service Provider Strategies
Understand trauma and violence, and its impacts on peoples' lives and behaviours.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen and believe victim's experiences: "That sounds like a horrible experience" • Affirm/validate: "No one deserves..." • Recognize strength: "You have really survived a lot..." • Express concern: "I am really concerned for your safety..."
Create emotionally and physically safe environments for clients and service providers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behave in a non-judgmental manner so that people feel deserving, understood, recognized and accepted. • Foster a sense of connection to build trust. • Provide clear information and predictable expectations about programming.
Foster opportunities for choice, collaboration, and connection.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate openly. • Convey non-judgmental responses. • Provide choices as to treatment/service preferences. • Consider choices collaboratively. • Listen actively to privilege the clients' voice.
Provide strengths-based and capacity-building approach to support client coping and resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Help clients identify their strengths through techniques such as motivational interviewing (a communication technique that improves engagement and empowerment). • Acknowledge the effects of historical and structural conditions. • Teach and model skills for recognizing triggers, calming, centering and staying present, including developmentally appropriate skills for children and youth.

Voices in the Courtroom: Empowering Victims through Victim Impact Statements



For National Victims and Survivors of Crime Week 2016, BC Victims of Homicide and their partners hosted a two-part event on Victim Impact Statements, which included a workshop led by Lovepreet Brar on writing a Victim Impact Statement, as well as series of presentations by Maryn Ferguson, Yves Cote, Dave Gustafson, and Judge Robert Hamilton. Videos of the sessions are available on the [BC Victims of Homicide website](http://www.bcvictimsofhomicide.ca).

Trauma Informed Approaches to Supporting Victims of Violence (cont'd)

Conclusion

Moving systems toward new paradigms of practice such as trauma and violence informed approaches, cultural safety and gender inclusivity takes time and incremental change. Trauma and violence informed approaches will better serve

everyone by reducing harm and creating better opportunities for recovery and justice.

To read the full article, please visit [Department of Justice Canada](#).

Practice Tips: Working in a Trauma-informed Way

By Wendy Potter, Program Manager, Community Safety and Crime Prevention Branch

As we move forward with working in a trauma informed way as well as in trauma informed systems, it is important to acknowledge that many service providers and professionals are and have already been working in a trauma informed way. The language may have changed but many of the key practice principles are similar to working in a victim centred or survivor centred way.

While there are many approaches, ideas and tips for embedding trauma informed practice into our work, below are a few that I have used in my work with survivors of violent crime.

Part of working in a trauma informed way is offering people real options and choices. This means telling the truth about the reality of what happens, whether it is reporting to police, going to court, or attending counselling. A sexual assault survivor once told me she wanted to report to police so that the guy who assaulted her would pay and spend his life in jail. We had an honest discussion about what it would mean for her if he didn't go to jail at all. Would she be okay with that? Was it still worth it for her? Were there other outcomes that made sense to her?

When working with clients, it is helpful to acknowledge their strengths and the ways they have coped with their situation. This may include acknowledging

the legacy of intergenerational trauma that many clients are carrying with them and reflecting on how we as service providers can best provide support in a way that recognizes, honours, and validates these experiences.

Creating a safe, welcoming environment is essential to working with clients in a trauma informed way. Consider removing clutter from your office and muting the phone while meeting with your client. Offer them a choice of where to sit. Some people are not comfortable sitting with their back to the door or in a corner. Provide clear information about clients' next steps and the options available. Try not to make promises you can't keep (such as calling a client every few days if you know this is not possible). Follow up with the client to explain if you're unable to do something you said you would and offer them an alternative. This lets clients know you are reliable and that they can trust you.

One of the most important things I learned through trauma informed practice is that clients are the experts of their own experiences. We may have information that they don't know about how the system works, but any choice they are going to make is a choice they have to live with. This is why it is so important to honor clients' choices even if we don't always agree or understand why they have made the choice they have. They have their reasons based on what they are dealing with in their life and they are doing the best they can in that moment.

Working with Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: Understanding the Neurobiology of Trauma

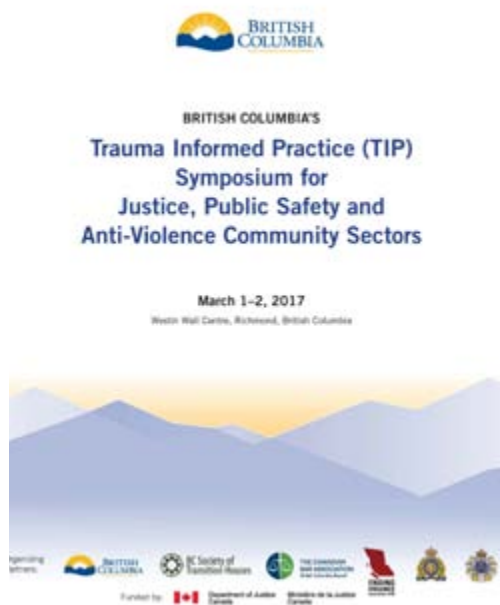
Ending Violence Association of BC is hosting an intensive two day workshop, "Working with Survivors of Gender-Based Violence: Understanding the Neurobiology of Trauma", with Dr. Lori Haskell on May 1 and 2, 2017. Dr. Haskell is one of Canada's leading expert psychologists on trauma informed practice and has provided expert witness testimony and training for the judiciary, police, Crown counsel, anti-violence advocates, therapists, social workers and others. The workshop provides theoretical and practical strategies to assist those working with survivors of sexual assault, intimate partner violence and other forms of gender-based violence, and will focus on complex and early attachment trauma, its effect on the body, biological and emotional systems, and brain circuitry. Participants will learn a new way of conceptualizing trauma, as well as techniques to help survivors cope, regulate, and expand their window of tolerance.

For more information, or to register, please see EVA BC's [EventBrite page](#).

Highlights from the 2017 TIP Symposium

British Columbia's Trauma Informed Practice (TIP) Symposium for Justice, Public Safety and Anti-Violence Community Sectors was held on March 1 and 2, 2017 in Richmond. The multi-disciplinary symposium brought together more than 300 representatives from police, Crown counsel, victim service and violence against women programs, corrections, judges, defence lawyers, family law lawyers, and others to learn about trauma informed practice. The symposium is part five year project, funded by Department of Justice Canada, to develop and implement a cross-sector, trauma informed practice training, education, and awareness curriculum for the justice and public safety sector.

The symposium included keynote presentations by Dr. Lori Haskell (University of Toronto), Dr. Jeffrey Schiffer (Justice Institute of BC), Nancy Poole (BC Centre of Excellence for Women's Health), Dr. John Briere (University of Southern California), which covered topics including the neurobiology of trauma, Aboriginal and health sector perspectives on trauma informed practice, and how complex trauma affects victims' responses. The symposium also included several cross sector panels with representation from police, corrections, family



lawyers, judges, and anti-violence organizations. Breakout sessions allowed participants to engage in discussions about pre-charge/investigation, the court process, post-sentencing, the civil court process, and Aboriginal justice, as well as working with clients with mental health and/or substance use issues, Aboriginal clients, immigrant/refugee clients, youth, and vicarious trauma.

Videos of the TIP Symposium sessions are [available online](#).

Community Safety and Crime Prevention Award Nominations Now Available!

Each year the Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General recognizes individuals, groups, and programs that have made outstanding contributions to crime prevention and community safety through the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Awards. These awards are announced during Crime Prevention Week (November 1 to 7).

There are five award categories including the Services to Victims Award, which recognizes an individual (paid or volun-

teer), community group or others who have provided exemplary leadership in providing services and supports to victims.

We encourage you to consider submitting nominations. To nominate an individual, group or program, please submit the award nomination form by July 14, 2017. Nomination forms and additional information about the awards are [available on our website](#).

Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Conference

October 18 to 19, 2017,
London, Ontario

Hosted by Canadian Domestic Homicide Prevention Initiative with Vulnerable Populations, this conference is for policy makers, mental health, justice and social service professionals involved in the prevention, assessment, management, and safety planning for domestic violence and domestic homicide. The conference explores working with Indigenous, rural, remote and northern, immigrant and refugee populations, and children exposed to domestic violence; emerging trends in Canadian domestic homicides; domestic homicide reviews in Canada; and risk assessment, risk management, and safety planning. The conference includes four plenary sessions, 60 workshops, a poster session and cocktail party, and an exhibitors' hall.

For more information about the conference, please visit the [conference website](#).

Testimonial Accommodation & Assistive Equipment

Testimonial accommodations are special steps taken to support victims or other witnesses of crime during their testimony. An accused has the right to see and hear the evidence of their accusers and anyone testifying against them. But testifying may be very upsetting and frightening for some, especially children, youths or vulnerable witnesses. In that case, Crown counsel or a witness may make a request to the judge for testimonial accommodations.

Videos intended to provide justice system staff and the public with some information about testimonial accommodation and assistive courtroom equipment are available on the [Government of British Columbia's website](#).

References

1. Anda, Robert F., Vincent J. Felitti, J. Douglas Bremner, John D. Walker, Charles Whitfield, Bruce D. Perry, Shanta R. Dube, and Wayne H. Giles. 2006. "The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. A convergence of evidence from neurobiology and epidemiology." *European Archives Of Psychiatry And Clinical Neuroscience* 256 (3):174-186.
2. Felitti, Vincent J., and Robert F. Anda. 2010. *The Relationship of Adverse Childhood Experiences to Adult Health, Well-being, Social Function, and Healthcare*: Cambridge University Press.
3. Cloitre, Marylene, Bradley C. Stolbach, Judith L. Herman, Bessel van der Kolk, Robert Pynoos, Jing Wang, and Eva Petkova. 2009. "A developmental approach to complex PTSD: childhood and adult cumulative trauma as predictors of symptom complexity." *Journal Of Traumatic Stress* 22 (5):399-408. doi: 10.1002/jts.20444.

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Online Training for Service Providers



[Victim Services: Supporting Victims Through the Justice System E-learning](#)

[Understanding and Responding to Elder Abuse E-Book and Video](#)

[Domestic Violence Safety Planning Online Training](#)

[Human Trafficking: Canada is Not Immune](#)

Videos of the following webinars are available online:

- [Crime Victim Assistance Program](#)
- [Human Trafficking](#)
- [Draft Justice Framework](#)