

National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education

Ten guidelines for schools and early childhood services

1



Training processes are needed to ensure leaders of schools and programs are trauma-aware! It is agreed that:

- A. Effective trauma-aware practice relies on effective leadership within education settings.
- B. Leaders who are not aware of the impacts of complex childhood trauma on children and adolescents and the means to address the impacts, are far less likely to support and lead trauma-aware schooling thinking and processes.
- C. Leaders who are trauma-informed are far more likely to recognise the benefits of trauma-aware schooling and support educational reform in their schools or programs.

2



Schools/programs should engage in high quality whole-of-staff training in trauma-aware schooling

- A. The mode and intensity of training may be dependent on school/program requirements and available training structures. However, this should not limit or deny school/program access to training.
- B. Where possible, education sectors (districts, regions, dioceses, etc.) should develop internal training structures to provide capacity building activity to schools/programs.
- C. Where needed, schools/programs can access accredited external providers to provide training and support that integrates the knowledge of trauma-aware approaches with the educational context. These training programs should incorporate sustainability measures to enable the ongoing application of trauma-aware schooling practices.

3



Schools/programs should identify students living in out-of-home care and ensure that trauma-aware processes are available to enhance the support and education of these students, working towards a positive educational trajectory for these children and young people.

4



Schools/programs should acknowledge that there are students in most schools who are not living in out-of-home care but who are still living with the outcomes of complex trauma and that some of these students remain unidentified. Therefore, trauma-aware practices should be inclusive of all children and young people in the education setting as a means for supporting all students.

5



Schools/programs should develop constructive working relationships with parents and carers of students who are living with the outcomes of complex trauma. This includes organisations overseeing residential care programs.

6



Schools/programs should develop constructive working relationships with local child and adolescent support agencies and specialists who provide services to their students. Schools/programs should be prepared to take a leadership role in these collaborative opportunities where required.

7



Children and young people should be involved in the design and evaluation of activities and supports that seek to meet their needs. The participation of children and young people in active feedback processes meet children's rights principles as well as have therapeutic benefit. This could include retrospective input from past students who are now adults.

8



Whole-of-school/program frameworks should be implemented that:

- address the needs of students living with the outcomes of complex trauma
- are also appropriate for and supportive of all students
- are protective of the professional and personal wellbeing of educators
- build capacity in the resilience of educators
- are inclusive of all adult staff members within the school (including front office staff, education support staff, etc) to ensure consistency of practice.

9



Schools/programs should acknowledge the potential impact that supporting traumatised children and young people can have on educators and other school personnel and should implement measures to provide support, supervision and reflective practice to address such impact. It is proposed that this will minimise concerns with educator attrition rates and address concerns with the impact that supporting these students can have on the personal and professional wellbeing of educators.

10



Policies developed by individual schools and early childhood services should be reviewed to identify and address elements that might enhance or hinder trauma-aware schooling. It is vital that behaviour management policy is examined in this light.

Ten guidelines for education systems

-  Training processes are needed to ensure leaders of education systems are trauma-aware! It is agreed that effective trauma-aware education practice relies on informed and supportive system leadership to develop policy and funding frameworks to support and resource the embedding of trauma-aware practice in education systems.
-  Education system law and policy should be reviewed to identify and address elements that might enhance or hinder trauma-aware schooling.
-  The embedding of a trauma-aware approach at a system level should be supported by a long term implementation strategy and change management approach that is committed to by governing bodies and by government.
-  Embedding a trauma-aware approach at a system level should take account of the cultural and geographic diversity of Australian states and territories, as well as the varying needs of schools/programs and communities.
-  A trauma-aware approach should be developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and leaders to ensure the cultural strength of the approach for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
-  Particular consideration is needed for (but not limited to) education settings:
 - in remote locations
 - that have boarding accommodations
 - that offer alternative or specialist education programs
 - with students from refugee backgrounds
 - with students living in out-of-home care
 - with students with disabilities
 - servicing students living with mental health concerns.
-  Cross-agency (whole of government and non government) funding and staffing of training and support programs should be investigated and negotiated as a cost effective strategy for enhancing outcomes for students accessing a number of services.
-  Collaborations between education systems and Australian universities and other tertiary training programs should be explored to help with pre-service and post-graduate training provision, resource development, program evaluation and further research.
-  Trauma-aware principles and implementation strategies should be incorporated into pre-service training and ongoing professional development for school educators and support practitioners (including psychologists, counsellors or therapists; teacher aides, chaplains; and school-based nurses and police officers, etc).
-  Education reform in the area of trauma-aware schooling should be quarantined from political and leadership change.

Artwork by Nicola Hooper

Report compiled by Cathy Hickey, Assistant Secretary, Independent Education Union Victoria Tasmania, with thanks to Queensland University of Technology and the Australian Childhood Foundation for their summary and National Guidelines infographics.

References

National Guidelines for Trauma-Aware Education, Queensland University of Technology and The Australian Childhood Foundation: www.research.qut.edu.au/c4ie/national-guidelines-for-trauma-aware-education/

Trauma-informed practice in schools: An explainer, Centre for education Statistics and Evaluation: www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/trauma-informed-practice-in-schools