

Clinician Guide for Trauma-Informed Care

A guide for clinical services providers performing physical examinations in sexual and reproductive health settings.



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What is Trauma?

Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It results from events or circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically and/or emotionally harmful or threatening and can include:

- Adverse childhood experiences
- Medical maltreatment or invasive procedures
- Personal experience of, or exposure to substance use disorder
- Physical, sexual, and emotional violence
- Poverty
- Racism, discrimination, and oppression
- Separation from, or loss of, a loved one
- Community violence, exposure to war or terrorism
- Sex and gender-based violence, including marginalization

Importance of Addressing Trauma in Clinical Settings

Adopting a trauma informed approach in a clinical setting can:

- Help healthcare providers deliver comprehensive care to their patients by having a complete picture of a patient's life—past and present.
- Improve patient engagement, shared decision making, and health outcomes.
- Assure patients they can share their concerns fully with their provider, who will work in partnership with them to decrease the effects of trauma or work to prevent re-traumatization.
- Avoid causing additional harm to patients who may have experienced trauma.

Re-Traumatization

This occurs when a person re-experiences a previously traumatic event—either consciously or unconsciously. Common activators of the stress response, or triggers, can include:

Key Principles

SAMHSA's six principles to guide a trauma informed approach:

- Safety**
- Trustworthiness + Transparency**
- Peer Support**
- Collaboration + Mutuality**
- Empowerment, Voice, + Choice**
- Cultural, Historical, + Gender Issues**

SAMHSA's Four Rs of Trauma-Informed Care

- Realizes the impact of trauma and potential for recovery**