



Ready, Set, Go

Success for All

A news brief linking people and resources to support quality practices in the education of all students



Trauma Sensitive Schools

Between the years of 1995 and 1997, Kaiser Permanente, in partnership with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), conducted the largest investigation thus far on the correlation between childhood abuse and neglect on an individual's overall health and well-being later in life. The CDC-Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study was part of a larger paradigm shift in public health to a focus on *Trauma Informed Care (TIC)*, in which individuals are recognized as survivors versus patients or consumers. A *trauma informed* approach, inclusive of an assumption that each individual seeking services is a trauma survivor, may not be practical for the educational setting. However, the aforementioned paradigm shift is undoubtedly responsible for the unparalleled approach to behavioral health in the world of education. While not taking on the role of a therapist, the ACEs study provided a rationale for recognizing the role of educators as psychological first responders with their students. [Trauma Sensitive Schools \(TSS\)](#) foster environments in which all students feel safe, welcomed, and supported and where addressing the impact of adverse childhood experiences on learning is a universal responsibility of an entire school community.

Get **READY** to Integrate a Trauma Sensitive Lens

In order to integrate a uniquely designed trauma sensitive lens to address the existing climate in a particular environment, first and foremost it is critical to determine the overall readiness of an individual school to do so. A trauma sensitive approach is not prescriptive, rather reflective of safe and supportive environments for all. The following tools will assist a school site in determining the overall readiness of operating through a trauma sensitive lens:

[Leading Trauma-Sensitive School Action Guide](#) – Embedded in this tool provided by The Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments are discussion questions to provide guidance in examining an individual school's level of readiness and identify potential readiness issues in three areas:

- Motivation – How motivated is the school community to adopt a trauma sensitive approach?
- General Capacity – What is the school's current organizational culture and climate and how well is it operating?
- Intervention-Specific Capacity – What are the specific capacities to adopt a trauma sensitive approach?

[Trauma Responsive School Implementation Assessment](#) – The Treatment and Services Adaptation Center for Resilience, Hope, and Wellness in Schools and the University of Maryland's Center for School Mental Health collaborated on the development of this assessment based on best-practice guidelines for trauma responsive school implementation. The assessment measures eight key domains of trauma responsive schools which include:

- Whole School Safety Programming
- Whole School Prevention Programming
- Whole School Trauma Programming
- Classroom-based Strategies
- Prevention/Early Intervention Trauma Programming
- Targeted Trauma Programming
- Staff Self-Care
- Community Context

Get **SET** to Integrate a Trauma Sensitive Lens

If an assessment reveals the need for the integration of a trauma sensitive lens to address the existing climate of an individual school, the following are methods in which staff may be supported in their overall knowledge and integration of such practices:

VDOE Regional Training and Technical Assistance Centers (T/TAC)

The Virginia Department of Education's regional [Training and Technical Assistance Centers \(T/TAC\)](#) may be an initial point of contact for any division or school in the Commonwealth interested in becoming trauma sensitive. A follow-up to such a request would be customized to the individualized needs of the division or school. Additional information regarding VDOE regional T/TACs may be found at [TTAC Online](#).

Virginia's Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative

In an effort to raise awareness in local communities and at the state level of the significant behavioral, emotional, and physical outcomes of childhood trauma, the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services' (VDBHDS) Office of Behavioral Health Wellness is sponsoring Virginia's Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative. Moving forward with the training of their third and fourth cohort in early 2019, at least one member of nearly half of the Community Services Boards (CSB) in the Commonwealth has been certified as an ACE Interface Master Trainer. Schools may reach out to their local CSB to request training developed by the founder of the Kaiser Permanente Study, Dr. Robert Anda. In order to determine if an individual from your local CSB has been trained, additional contact information may be found at [Virginia Prevention Works](#).

Virginia Tiered Systems of Support (VTSS)

In addition to services offered by regional T/TACs, the Virginia Department of Education has provided funding to implement and sustain the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support (VTSS) framework in approximately 54 of the 134 school divisions in Virginia. School divisions that are members of a VTSS cohort may be eligible to receive trauma sensitive training as an enhancement to their existing Tier 1 structure. To inquire about such training, the Division Point of Contact should reach out to the External Systems Coaches assigned to their division through the Research and Implementation Center (RIC) at Virginia Commonwealth University as well as those assigned from the appropriate regional T/TAC. For additional information, please visit [VTSS](#).

To Find Out More about Trauma Sensitive Practices, GO to

[Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package](#) – The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments has developed a comprehensive training package that provides a framework and roadmap for adopting a trauma sensitive approach school- or division-wide. The package components include:

- Trauma-Sensitive Schools Implementation Guide
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Handout Packet
- Leading Trauma-Sensitive School Action Guide

[The Trauma-Informed School: A Step-by-Step Implementation Guide for Administrators and School Personnel](#) is an “all-inclusive guide designed to give school administrators of any school (elementary, middle, or high school) step-by-step instructions on how to turn a school of any size into a trauma sensitive school. With over 250 pages of content, this guide gives you the protocols you need along with a link to download all the documents needed for a successful implementation.” A review by a reader states, “Our traditional model is NOT working. In this guide, Jim and Heather transform the most current brain science into an approach that gets results. Their work challenges us to rethink what works best for student discipline, proving that accountability and compassion can co-exist with authentic and amazing results.”

[Locality Specific Service Providers](#) includes a table of the resources identified throughout this document, including a school division’s specific:

- VDOE Superintendent Region
- VDOE Regional Training and Technical Assistance Center
- Virginia’s DBHDS Primary Region
- Virginia’s DBHDS Developmental Services Region
- Community Services Board

As this is a dynamic document intended to reflect the most recent changes of the referenced departments, please contact Amber at knightad@jmu.edu to report inaccuracies or additions.

References

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This news brief is a collaborative effort of the Virginia Department of Education Training and Technical Assistance Centers at George Mason University and James Madison University. This issue was prepared by the staff at the VDOE TTAC at James Madison University. For questions about content, please contact Amber Knighting (knightad@jmu.edu), Gina Martin (martingk@jmu.edu), or Kendal Swartzentruber (swartzkl@jmu.edu).

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[VDOE](#)

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