

# Community-based Strategies for Trauma-Informed Tribal Child Welfare Practice



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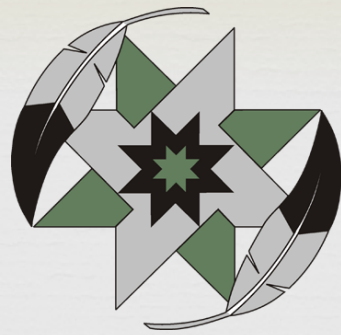
National  
Native Children's  
Trauma Center



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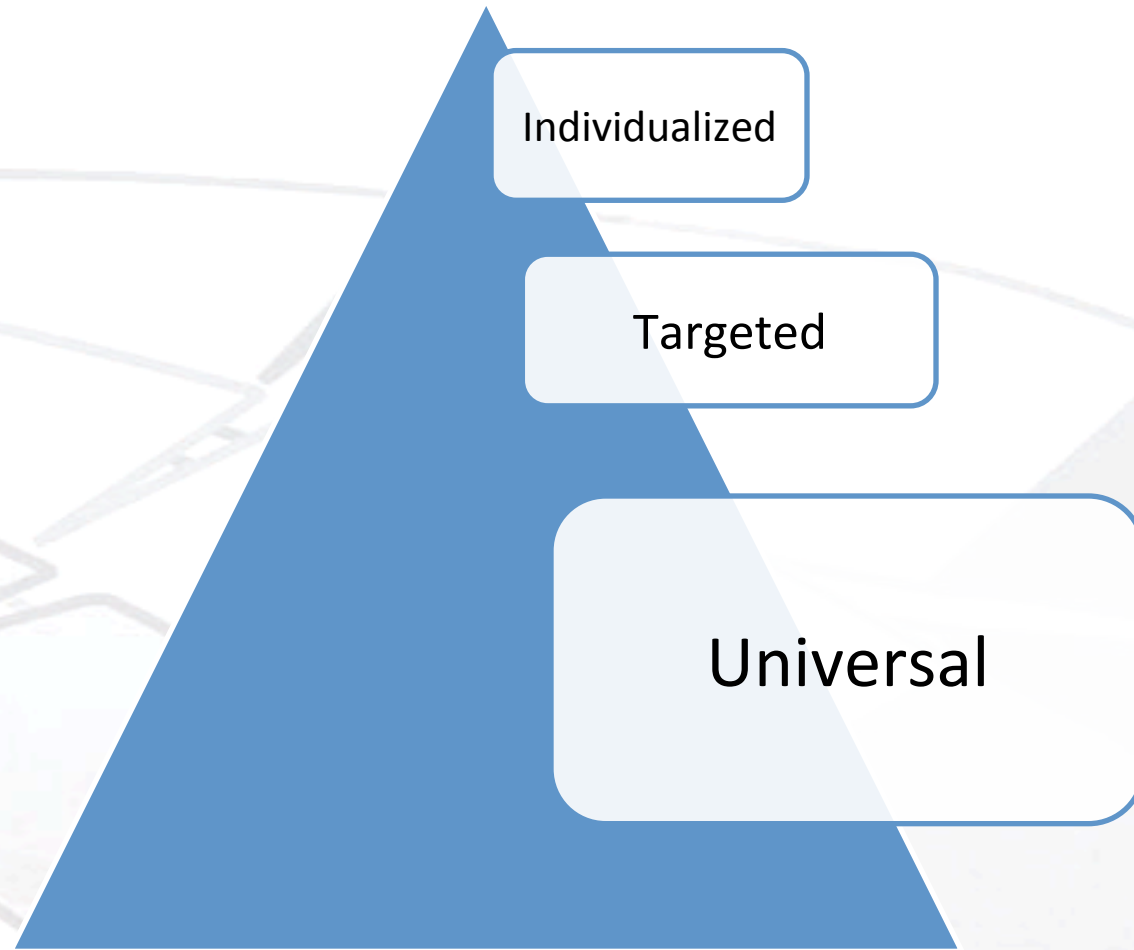
## National Native Children's Trauma Center



- **Part of the University of Montana College of Education's Institute for Educational Research and Service (IERS)**
- **Established** in Fall 2007 to serve as a Treatment and Services Adaptation Center (Cat II) within the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
- **Mission:** *In respectful partnerships with tribes, NNCTC will implement, adapt, evaluate and disseminate trauma interventions to decrease the social, emotional, spiritual and educational impact traumatic experiences have on American Indian and Alaska Native children.*



# Trauma-informed Strategies: Universal, Targeted, Individualized



# Overview of ACF Grant



## Goals of the Grant:

- In partnership with the Rocky Mountain Region BIA Social Services, the grantee will work collaboratively to develop a trauma-informed system of child welfare practice which will include evidence-based detection, treatment, and prevention mechanisms for children and families.
- The initiative will start with BIA Child Welfare workers and extend to other child-serving individuals and agencies in the community including: Tribal Social Services, Law Enforcement, Juvenile Justice, Courts, Schools, Tribal Programs, Foster Parents, and Community Members.
- A priority of the grant is to address and reduce the high stress levels and high turnover rates of child protective workers through Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) training and mitigation including individual, professional, and organizational level strategies.

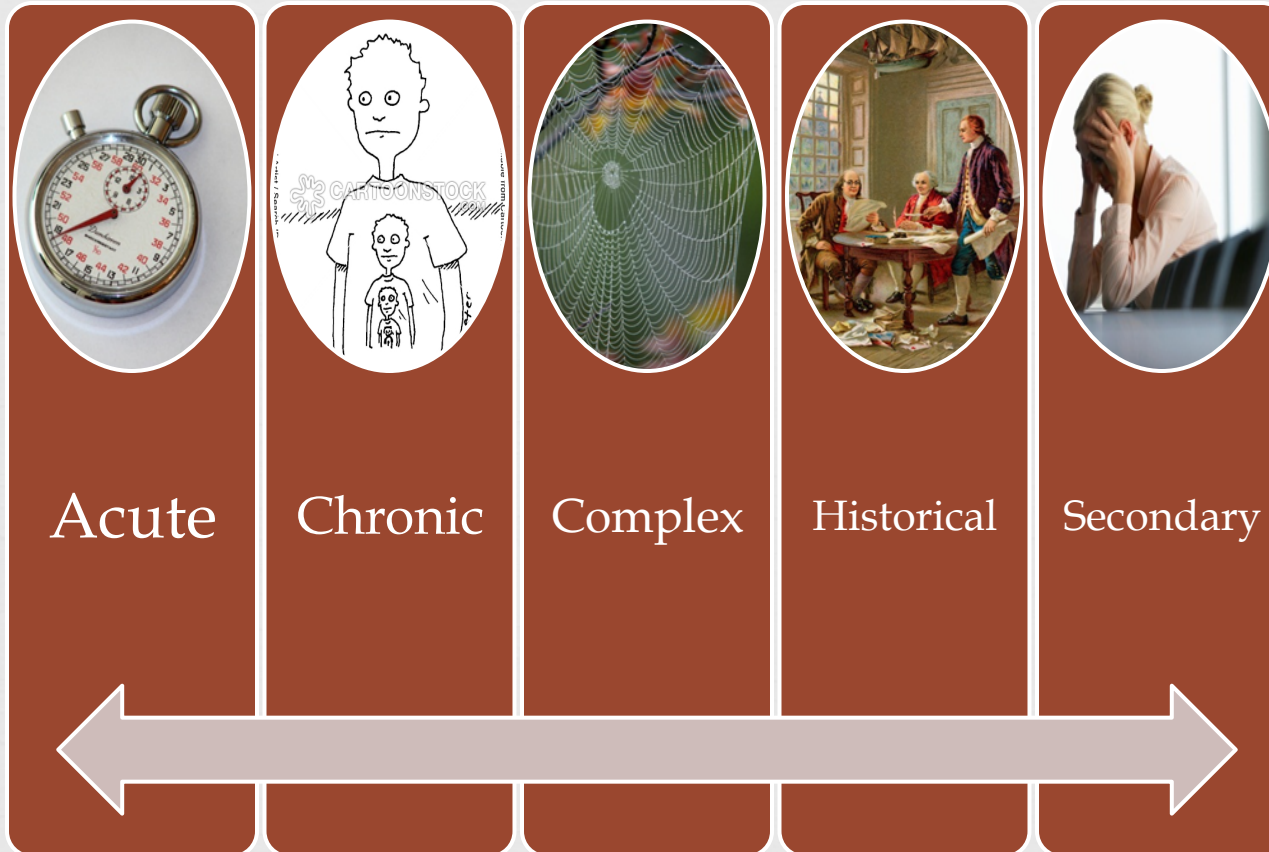


# What is “Trauma”?



☞ Trauma results from adverse life experiences that **overwhelm** an individual's capacity to cope and to adapt positively to whatever threat he or she faces (Van der Kolk, 1996).

# Types of Trauma





# HT is collective



“A collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation. . .It is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events”

(p. 320)

Evans-Campbell, T., 2008)

# Why a Trauma Lens?



- Our most pressing health issues can be attributed to traumatic childhood experiences
- Trauma is preventable
- People can heal from the impact of trauma



# Why a Trauma Lens?



- It is a lens that creates opportunity
- Strengths-based model
- Asks the right question

# Resiliency

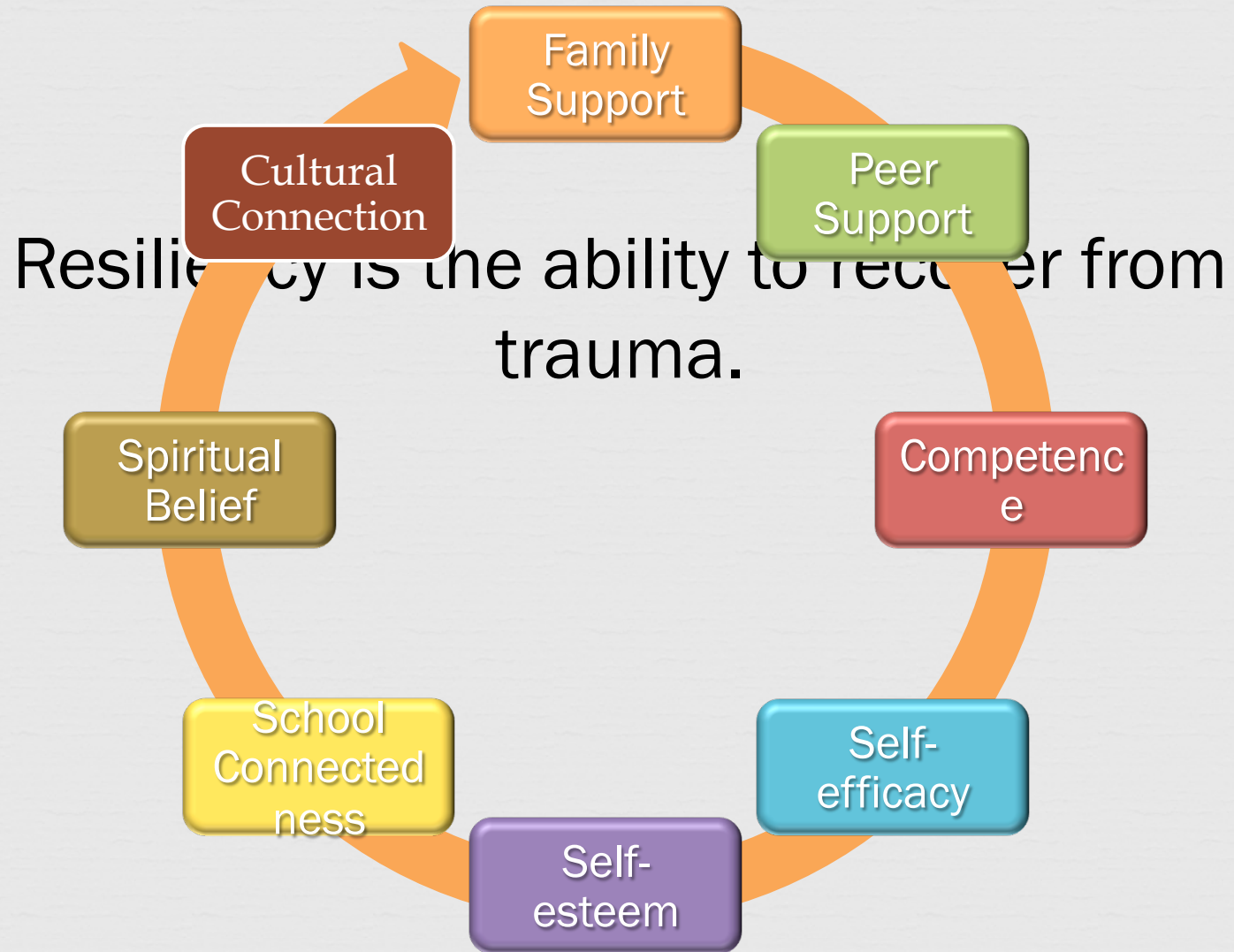


- ❧ History shows tremendous resiliency among AI/AN communities, families, and individuals
- ❧ Research shows consistent correlations between cultural identity, positive affiliation and engagement with traditional culture, and indigenous mental health and resiliency

(Wexler, 2014)



# What Supports Resilience?





## Protective Factors for AI/AN

- ✓ Feeling connected to tribe
- ✓ Cultural Identity
- ✓ Language
- ✓ Ceremony
- ✓ Spirituality



# Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System



# Trauma-Informed Child Welfare Systems

In a trauma-informed child welfare system, the child welfare worker:

- Understands the impact of trauma
- Can integrate that understanding into planning
- Understands his or her role



# Definition of Trauma-Informed Child- and Family-Service System

A trauma-informed child- and family-service system is one in which all parties involved recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the system including children, caregivers, and service providers. Programs and agencies within such a system infuse and sustain trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills into their organizational cultures, practices, and policies. They act in collaboration with all those who are involved with the child, using the best available science, to facilitate and support the recovery and resiliency of the child and family.

Source: National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Retrieved from <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/topics/creating-trauma-informed-systems>

## Why is this important?

*The research is clear that the experience of abuse or neglect leaves a particular traumatic fingerprint on the development of children that cannot be ignored if the child welfare system is to meaningfully improve the life trajectories of maltreated children, not merely keep them safe from harm.*

- Bryan Samuels, Former Commissioner for the Administration on Children, Youth and Families,  
Testimony to House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Human Resources, Congress on 6/16/2011



## Why is this important? (continued)

*Simply removing a child from a dangerous environment will not by itself undo the serious consequences or reverse the negative impacts of early fear learning. There is no doubt that children in harm's way should be removed from a dangerous situation. However, simply moving a child out of immediate danger does not in itself reverse or eliminate the way that he or she has learned to be fearful. The child's memory retains those learned links, and such thoughts and memories are sufficient to elicit ongoing fear and make a child anxious.*

Source: National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2010). *Persistent fear and anxiety can affect young children's learning and development: Working Paper No. 9*. Retrieved from [www.developingchild.harvard.edu](http://www.developingchild.harvard.edu).

# Addressing Trauma Requires an Integrated Approach

- Trauma has biological and psychological effects that impact behavioral, social, and emotional domains.
- The impact of trauma can hinder development and interfere with children's functioning in relationships, school, and life.
- Complex challenges of children who have experienced trauma may not be addressed by the system and services as they are currently designed.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), Administration for Children Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. (2012). *Information memorandum* (Log No: ACYF-CB-IM-12-04). Available from [http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws\\_policies/policy/im/2012/im1204.pdf](http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/cb/laws_policies/policy/im/2012/im1204.pdf)



# Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System



# Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System

*(continued)*

1. Maximize physical and psychological safety for children and families.
2. Identify trauma-related needs of children and families.
3. Enhance child well-being and resilience.
4. Enhance family well-being and resilience.
5. Enhance the well-being and resilience of those working in the system.
6. Partner with youth and families.
7. Partner with agencies and systems that interact with children and families.

# Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child Welfare System

*(continued)*

## The Elements:

- Are the responsibility of ALL professionals who work in and with the child welfare system
- Must, when implemented, take into consideration the child's developmental level and reflect sensitivity to the child's family, culture, and language
- Help child welfare systems achieve the goals of .....



# Elements are Consistent with Child Welfare “Best Practices”

- Trauma-informed child welfare (TICW) practice mirrors well-established child welfare priorities.
- Implementation does not require more time, but rather a *redirection* of time.
- TICW means applying the trauma lens to everyday practice and weaving the trauma perspective into what workers already do.

# Cultural and Community-Specific Adaptations

Trauma as common, universal experience.....

Communities as unique: What works HERE?



# Strategy 1: Safety Assessment Training for Child Welfare Workers



- ☞ Importance of trauma-informed safety assessment
- ☞ Implementation
- ☞ Examples





# Adaptation: Trauma Screening



# Strategy 2: Child Protection Team (CPT) Meetings

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- ☞ From Design Teams to CPTs
- ☞ Engaging the whole child-serving system
- ☞ Using CPTs for trauma-informed consultation
- ☞ CPT trainings
- ☞ Team building
- ☞ Addressing community-specific issues





# Strategy 3: Trauma-Informed Family Group Decision Making (FGDM)



- ☞ Mitigation of trauma caused by removal and separation
- ☞ Permanency planning
- ☞ Empowers families to be a part of change process
  
- ☞ Link to Webinar:  
<http://nnctcwebinars.weebly.com>





# Adaptation: FGDM



# Strategy 4: Foster/Resource Parent Training

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- ❧ Collaboration with Tribal programs (licensing and IV-E)
  - ❧ Uses trauma-specific curriculum with practical skills
  - ❧ Cultural adaptation
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- ❧ Link to webinar: <http://nnctcwebinars.weebly.com>

# Adaptation: Individualized Community Case Study



- ∞ Age
- ∞ Background
- ∞ Trauma History
- ∞ Symptoms
- ∞ Current Placement Issues
- ∞ Strengths/Evidence of Resilience
- ∞ Other Important Information About the Child



# Strategy 5: Suicide Prevention



- ☞ Coalition-building
- ☞ Living Works Trainings
- ☞ Promotion of Lifeline
- ☞ Emergency Response



# Strategy 6: Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS) Mitigation for Workers



- ☞ STS training
- ☞ Personal, professional, and organizational stress mitigation plans
- ☞ Team building and supervision





# What Can You Implement?



# Resource List



- ☞ Resource Parents Curriculum
- ☞ Child Welfare Trauma Toolkit
- ☞ SafeTALK/ ASIST
- ☞ Trauma screening
- ☞ STS Resources
- ☞ Webinars
- ☞ Training/ Technical Assistance Providers
- ☞ [Eamon.Anderson@mso.umt.edu](mailto:Eamon.Anderson@mso.umt.edu)
- ☞ [Patrick.Shannon@mso.umt.edu](mailto:Patrick.Shannon@mso.umt.edu)



# Closing



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