

# Runaway and Homeless Youth Training & Technical Assistance Center

## Trauma Informed Care FAQs

**Trauma Informed Care—Why Should It Matter to Me?** While understanding trauma is a significant first step to addressing the needs of those who have experienced or witnessed abuse and violence, services are limited if offered interventions are not based in this understanding. Organizations dedicated to providing crisis intervention training and support should also provide professional youth care workers the tools to understand the origins of certain behaviors and to respond to youth and families in positive ways.

Trauma Informed Care (TIC) has been getting increased attention, especially since the creation of The National Center for Trauma Informed Care, operated by SAMHSA. The site includes research, articles, and overviews of Trauma Informed efforts. However, there are still many misconceptions about trauma and how Trauma Informed Care can impact the way an organization provides services.

**So, how do you know if your organization is operating from a Trauma Informed perspective?** Most organizations have staff members who understand the impact of trauma. However, the purpose of Trauma Informed Care is to provide a comprehensive organization wide approach to responding to those seeking services. Whether the person is a professional youth worker, clinician, administrator, or even the person who cooks meals or drives the van, everyone should understand how histories of trauma can impact the behavior we see from youth and families. Once everyone is on the same page with basic knowledge and insight, the team can come together to examine everything from agency policies to specific behavioral interventions from this shared perspective. If youth team disagrees over consequences for behaviors such as not doing chores; cursing; refusal to go on outings; or not wanting to participate in group activities, there would be some evidence that consensus about the origins of the behavior and the rationale for chosen interventions is missing. In addition, if staff members talk in terms of “discipline,” “control,” or “punishments,” your organization is missing the mark.

**Isn't Trauma Informed Care (TIC) just a way of letting people do whatever they want without holding them accountable?** All you have to do is watch one hour of television on any given night and you will see a drama, news story, or court case where the focus is on how abuse, neglect, violence, and other traumatic events can result in self-destructive behavior that impacts not only the individual, but others in the community. The debate centers on whether or not people should be held accountable for their actions regardless of what has happened to them in the past. TIC doesn't negate the need for consequences or accountability. It emphasizes that if we understand behavior, we understand why certain interventions may or may not work. If we know why a youth reacts to us in a certain way, we are less likely to take it personally. TIC impresses that helping youth and families understand their actions in context of past experiences will help them learn to make other choices over time. TIC also incorporates an understanding of how normal development and brain functioning contributes to what we see from youth and families.