

# Trauma-Informed Care

## *Implications for Court Staff*

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Prepared for:  
Oregon Judicial Department staff

# A bit about me...

- LCSW; clinical practice with high risk youth and families
- 20 years in social service (mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, criminal justice, and family courts)
- Not a trauma expert, but have expertise in trauma recovery (EMDR), neurobiology, adult learning, and how trauma impacts criminal justice practice

## Goals for the afternoon:

- Learn about brains, neurobiology, trauma.
- Discuss how this information applies to your work in the court system

# Objectives

- Lecture “light”
- Share stories and experiences
- Open discussion

*Please chime in! Your voice is key.*

# Agenda

- Trauma basics
- The impact of trauma on clients
- The impact of trauma on service delivery
- Trauma Informed practices
- Why court staff should know
- Application
- Questions & Consult time

# Trauma 101

- Single event
- Complex marinade over time
- Interpersonal violence, especially at the hands of an authority/trusted figure, is particularly damaging
- System involved clients often experience both single and complex trauma

*“Trauma is an event that is extremely upsetting and at least temporarily overwhelms internal resources.”*



***John Briere, 2006***

# Traumatic events

- *Physical assault*
- *Sexual abuse*
- *Emotional or psychological abuse*
- *Neglect/abandonment*
- *Domestic Violence*
- *Gang/street violence*
- *Witnessing abuse/violence*
- *War/Genocide*
- *Accidents*
- *Natural or man-made disasters*
- *Dangerous environment*
- *Witness or experience street violence*
- *Rape*
- *Oppression*
- ***Any others?***



# ACE Study

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (CDC, 1995)
- ACE score includes:
  - Lack of nurturance and support
  - Hunger, physical neglect, lack of protection
  - Divorce in the home
  - Substance abuse in the home
  - Mental illness or attempted suicide among household members
  - Incarceration of household member

# Cumulative impact

- ACE Study: Scores 0-10

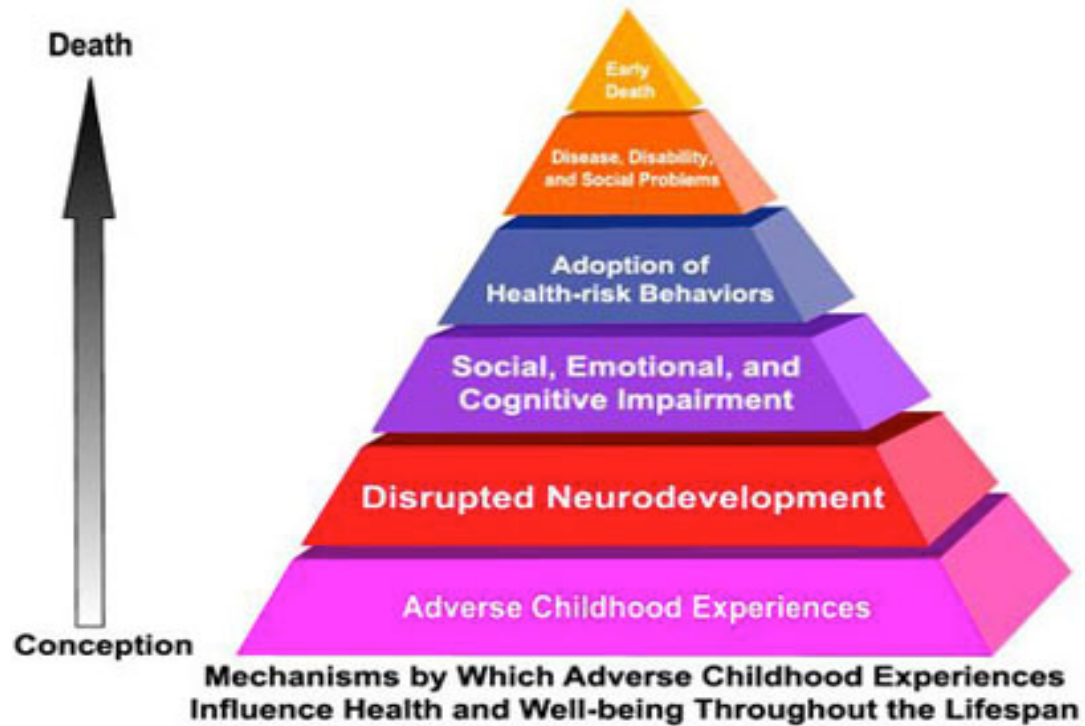
Score of 4 or more:

- Twice as likely to smoke
- 12 times as likely to have attempted suicide
- Twice as likely to be alcoholic
- 10 times as likely to have injected street drugs

# Cumulative impact

- ACE score highly correlated with:
  - Prostitution
  - Mental Health disorders
  - Substance abuse
  - Early criminal behavior
  - Physical health problems
  - Early death

[www.ACEstudy.org](http://www.ACEstudy.org)



# Impact of trauma

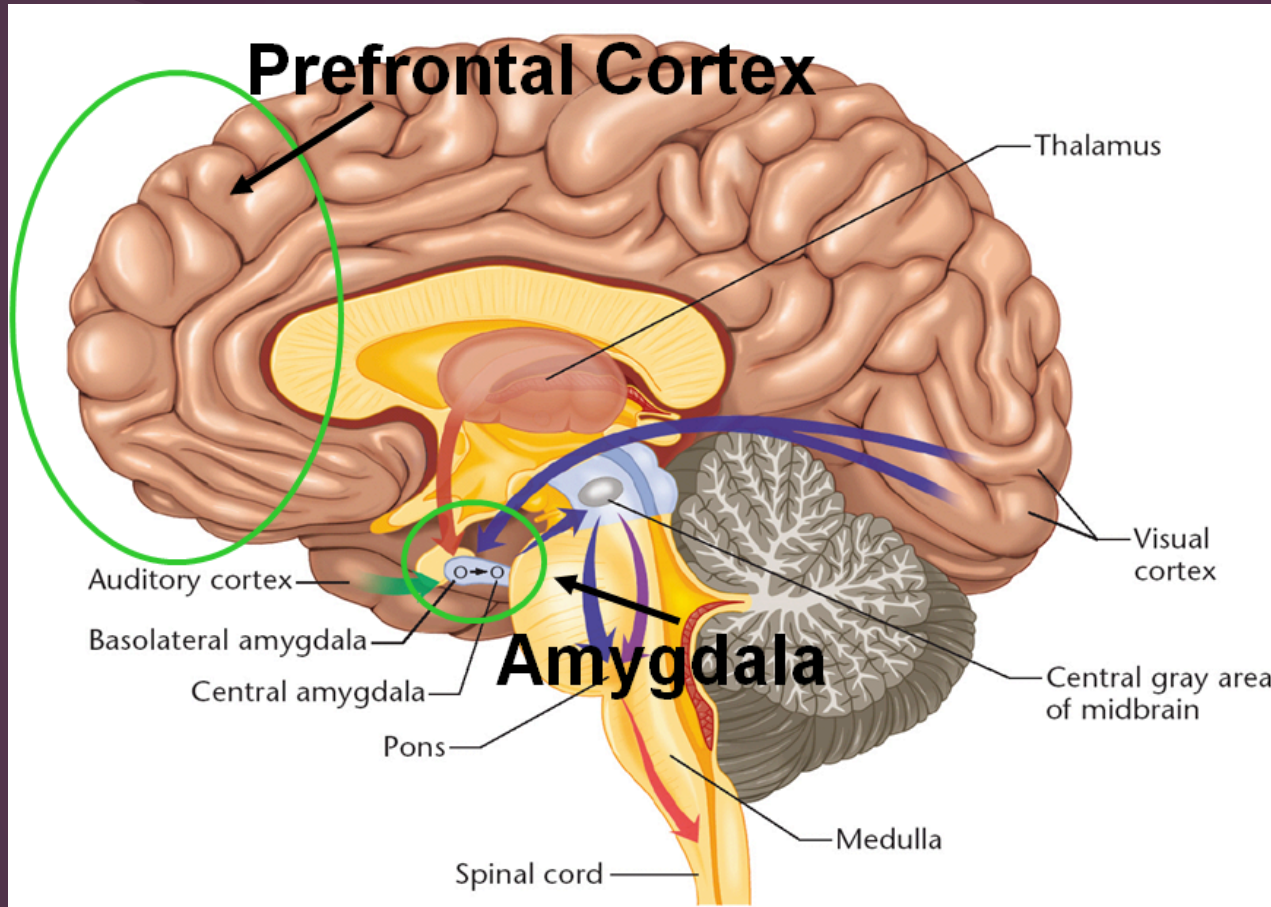
Chronic trauma interferes with neurobiological development and the capacity to integrate sensory, emotional and cognitive information into a cohesive whole. Developmental trauma sets the stage for unfocused responses to subsequent stress (Van der Kolk).

# Impact of Trauma

- **Emotional reactions** (hyper-vigilance, dissociation)
- **Psychological and cognitive reactions** (blame, over-dependent, slowed thinking)
- **Behavioral and physical reactions** (pain, sleep disturbance, substance abuse)
- **Beliefs** (sense of self, world is unsafe)

# Common trauma reactions

- Without helpful affect regulation skills, people who are traumatized may have to rely on tension reduction behaviors—external ways to reduce triggered distress (Briere, 2004)
- ***What are some common tension reduction skills?***



When trauma happens:

- Fight, flight, freeze
- Tend and befriend



# “Lid Flipping”



# FEAR

- Accumulated trauma
- Neurobiological impact -- “flipped lids”
- Behavioral results
- *What does this look like in the folks you encounter in your job?*

# Enter... The System

- A person has experienced trauma(s) meets...
  - Police
  - Child Welfare
  - Self Sufficiency
  - Juvenile Justice
  - Corrections
  - Housing
  - Mental Health system.
  - And on and on and on...



homeforward



If first we must  
“do no harm”,

how do we not make  
it worse?

# Trauma Informed Care

“Trauma-Informed Care is a strengths-based framework that is grounded in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and survivors to rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.” (Hopper et al, 2010)

# Trauma Informed Care

“Trauma-informed organizations, programs, and services are based on an understanding of the vulnerabilities or triggers of trauma survivors that traditional service delivery approaches may exacerbate, so that these services and programs can be more supportive and avoid re-traumatization.” (SAMHSA)

## Core principles of trauma-informed systems of care

- Awareness: Everyone understands the impact of trauma
- Safety: Ensuring physical and emotional safety.
- Trustworthiness: Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries.
- Choice: Prioritizing consumer choice and control.
- Collaboration: Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with consumers. Integrating care.
- Empowerment: Prioritizing consumer empowerment and skill-building. Relationships heal. Recovery is possible.

We can't change people's childhoods and traumas, but we can increase our sensitivity to how people function due to the impact of earlier experiences.



# How might trauma impact behavior?

- Difficulty getting motivated and following through with:
  - Directives
  - Job training
  - Education
- All or nothing thinking
- Seems “turned off”. Lacking emotion.
- Impulsive. Reactive.
- Does not engage in services
- Complains that the system is unfair. Feels they are being targeted.
- Interpersonal conflicts with authorities
- Irritable, easily agitated, angry

## Those behaviors are also trauma reduction behaviors

- But those behaviors can drive systems and workers nuts! We observe:
  - Uncooperative
  - Manipulative
  - Doesn't care about rules
  - Non-compliant
  - Difficult to engage
- What other behaviors might we see that may be resulting from trauma?

# Trauma-Informed lens

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What happened to you?

*rather than*

What's wrong with you?

# TIC language

- I wonder if...
- I notice that...
- Because I know it is hard to remember information in times of stress, and being at court is stressful, can you repeat...
- Accessing services can sometimes feel traumatizing and scary...
- I am getting ready to...
- What you can expect is...

- Is being knowledgeable about trauma and TIC helpful in your position? If so how?
- What are you doing or what can you do to be more trauma informed in your role?
- With staff and officers?
- Offenders/clients? Their families?
- What do you need to know more about?

## ***Application of Trauma-Informed Care***

# Discussion

- What are some typical “difficult” behaviors you encounter that may be common trauma responses?
- How might you interact with clients to mitigate system impact, reduce trauma responses and increase engagement?
  - Remember principles of TIC:
    - Awareness
    - Safety
    - Trustworthiness
    - Choice
    - Collaboration
    - Empowerment