

Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework: *My story, my health, my future*



Tips for health staff from children and young people, and their families, carers and support workers

- **Make us feel welcome.** Simple welcoming behaviours like smiling, making eye contact, and talking to children and young people, not only the adult, is helpful.
- **Don't make us tell our story over and over.** Requiring clients to retell their story can be retraumatising. Check the health records, and speak to other services involved.
- **Speak honestly to us.** Honesty is critical to building trust and creating safety. Make sure clients understand what you are saying and ask clients what they want.
- **Minimise wait times.** Children and young people with complex needs may need special provisions to reduce long wait times for services and appointments. Waiting a long time for services or in an emergency department may reduce feelings of control and remind people of experiences of violence, abuse or neglect where the perpetrator took control away from them.
- **Involve families and carers in planning.** Recognise the knowledge and experience families and carers bring and actively involve them in care planning (where appropriate).
- **Help us access other services.** The health system is difficult to navigate, and care is not always coordinated. Support clients to access other appropriate services.
- **Treat us as a partner.** Collaboration and partnership with children, young people, families and carers is critical for trauma-informed care. Listen and respond to the needs of children and young people, especially if they tell you they don't feel safe.
- **Keep our GPs in the loop.** Families value the support of their GPs. It's critical for health workers to work closely with a family's GP so that care is integrated and holistic.
- **Know how the system works.** It is helpful for Health workers to better understand the out-of-home care (OOHC) system. Visit www.health.nsw.gov.au/kidsfamilies/MCFhealth/Pages/OOHCH-Program.aspx or www.facs.nsw.gov.au/families to find out more.
- **If you aren't sure if a child or young person is in OOHC, ask them about their living arrangements.** If they are in OOHC, build a relationship with their carers, caseworker and their NSW Health OOHC Health Pathway Coordinator.

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- **Own your own emotions and look after yourself.** Children and young people take their cue from adults. If you or their parent or carer is scared or distressed, this is likely to scare or upset the child or young person.
- **Explain what's happening and why.** Routine things like shift changeovers or staff washing their hands before a procedure may frighten or confuse children if they don't understand what is being done and why. Check in and explain each step prior to a procedure, provide choice and listen. Not feeling in control can be a trigger for people with experiences of trauma.
- **If appointments are running late, let the child or young person and their carer know.** Provide information about how long they will have to wait, and offer choices, if possible. Can they go for a walk and come back?
- **Understand that children are experts at survival.** When children or young people are stressed, they may react unexpectedly or not share information. That is part of their survival skill set. Be patient and allow time for them to share. This may take a number of appointments. People with experiences of trauma may find it difficult to trust new people.
- **Children feel safer with someone they know and trust.** Ask the child who they trust and whether they would like that person to attend appointments with them. Choice is empowering. Talk to the child's caseworker to better understand the child's experiences and needs.
- **Children and carers who are stressed may not remember details about healthcare afterwards.** Consider writing a one page summary with the child or young person, using language they understand and will recall later, setting out who they saw and why, what happened in the appointment and what the child or young person or their carer needs to do to follow up after the appointment.