

How to Find a Trauma Informed Provider



Whether you are visiting a physician, dentist, or therapist, certain factors will help you determine if your provider is applying a trauma informed care approach.

WHAT CAN I EXPECT FROM A TRAUMA INFORMED PROVIDER?

Practitioners who are trauma informed have an understanding of trauma and its impacts on your emotional and general well-being. They recognize that you and other traumatized clients often have been victimized by people who claimed to care about you and that it might be hard for you to distinguish between safe and unsafe relationships. As such, trauma informed providers go the extra mile to make sure that you feel both emotionally and physically safe.

ENVIRONMENT

Organizations and providers who are trauma informed make an effort to create an environment that is comfortable for you. Spatial layouts, furniture, light, and colors are carefully selected to create a space that promotes a sense of calm, safety, dignity, empowerment and wellbeing. If anything in the environment of an office creates stress for you, don't hesitate to ask if they can accommodate you and remove whatever is the source of your distress. Trauma informed providers are willing to alter the physical space whenever possible to best fit your needs.

ACCOMMODATIONS

Additionally, if a particular visit or examination triggers your anxiety, you can ask permission to bring a family member or any other person that helps you feel more comfortable. Trauma informed practitioners also strive to build a relationship of trust with you and with all their clients. When you are with a trauma informed provider, you should expect a non-judgmental approach.

EXPLANATIONS

Trauma informed providers are fully transparent and explain everything they do and why they do it before doing anything. For example, providers in any setting, including medical ones, will not touch you or perform any physical examination or intervention before asking your permission and approval. Even when consent is granted, providers will be sensitive to your needs and proceed cautiously, often checking with you and pausing if they notice any discomfort. Once again, do not hesitate to express your needs and ask the practitioner to pause or stop anything that might be causing you distress.

RESPECT

When you are visiting a trauma informed provider, you should feel that you are very well respected. While practitioners share their knowledge and expertise with you, they don't position themselves as the expert and instead treat you as the expert of your situation and life experiences.

STRENGTHS FOCUSED

Another important guiding principle of trauma-informed care is the application of a strengths-focused approach. Practitioners recognize what you did in the past and what you are currently doing to cope with your struggles and point out choices you make that help you achieve your goals. They further build a relationship of trust with you by adopting a collaborative approach and being consistent with what they say and do. As a client, you should always feel that you are in control of the situation and that your choices are prioritized. Practitioners who are trauma informed will ask you questions with openness and curiosity without making assumptions.

EMPOWERMENT

Additionally, providers will not impose any interventions or ideas but will help you make informed decisions, thus giving you a greater sense of empowerment. Providers will sometimes have to ask necessary but sensitive questions, like doctors who need to inquire about your sexual history, to determine the appropriate testing you might need. In those cases, providers who apply a trauma informed approach will carefully explain why they are seeking that type of information, the options you have, and potential outcomes, as well as reiterate that you can refuse to respond and choose not to proceed with the examination. Ask for those types of explanations if they are not promptly given.

CULTURE & GENDER SENSITIVITY

Culture and gender sensitivity is a factor to look for in trauma-informed practitioners. They recognize how people from different cultures perceive and respond to trauma differently and implement a cultural and gender-sensitive practice. They will ask questions to understand your perspectives better and will focus on your distress, in the way that you define it and co-construct goals according to your desires, values, and beliefs.

SUMMARY

These are the principles that practitioners and organizations should follow to be trauma informed:

Safety - everyone in an organization, including clients, partners, family, friends, and staff, should feel physically and psychologically safe.

Trustworthiness and transparency - decisions are conducted with transparency, which helps to build trust and create clear expectations, e.g., Explaining precisely what a procedure will consist of or the gender of a provider.

Collaboration and mutuality - working to remove the power imbalance between them and clients and meaningfully share power and decision-making, e.g., informed consent models.

Empowerment - recognizing and building on the strengths of clients and their communities, helping them feel and be involved in their care

Voice and choice - allowing choice to be central in the decision-making process and the client's voice to be present and heard.

Culture, historical, and gender issues - implementing policies, protocols, and processes that recognize and are responsive to the racial, ethnic, cultural, gender and sexuality, ability, and communication needs of the client

REFERENCES

www.samhsa.gov

www.orygen.org.au

Further Information can also be found at
www.ticnutah.org
