

Changing needs of families in supportive Housing

Trauma-Informed Services

Trends???

- ▶ More families. A shift from single women to many more women with small children.
- ▶ Increased recidivism in our short -term housing. Women who leave without support services tend to cycle back into homelessness.
- ▶ More domestic violence/trauma. Situations which warrant supportive housing.
- ▶ Funding cuts. Having to do more with less.
- ▶ The need/request. *Trauma-informed* services in all types of housing. Staff who understand and respond to trauma will strengthen their support services and produce better outcomes.

What is trauma?

- ▶ Trauma refers to intense and overwhelming experiences that involve serious loss, threat or harm to a person's physical and/or emotional well being.
- ▶ Traumatic experiences often overwhelm the persons coping resources. This often leads the person to find a way of coping that may work in the short run but may cause serious harm in the long run. (Fight or Flight responses)

Why is being Trauma Informed important?

- ▶ Trauma can have a significant effect on how people relate to themselves and the world around them
- ▶ To provide effective services we need to understand the life situations that may be contributing to the persons current problems
- ▶ Many current problems faced by the people we serve may be related to traumatic life experiences. Trauma is often the gateway to housing instability.

Why is being Trauma Informed important?

- ▶ People who have experienced traumatic life events are often very sensitive to situations that remind them of the people, places or things involved in their traumatic event. (Linda and her child experience)
- ▶ These reminders, also known as triggers, may cause a person to relive the trauma and view our setting/organization as a source of distress rather than a place of healing and wellness
- ▶ In systems transformation the goal is to create and support work and service environments where people feel safe, respected and empowered

Principles of Trauma-Informed Services

- ▶ Consider all aspects of service delivery in order to provide services that are safe and empowering and not re-traumatizing
 - Physical space and environment
 - Language and body language
 - Policies/Rules
- ▶ Present options and choices whenever possible
- ▶ Attempt to return a sense of safety, independence and control

Ways the YWCA became Trauma-informed

- ▶ All staff were required to develop competencies in trauma informed care through a partnership with the University of Buffalo. Most staff have worked in the field for 10 plus years but have never had trauma training.
- ▶ We engaged women who have used our program to help us identify practices that were harmful and could re-traumatize people. Reward the challenge!

Ways the YWCA became Trauma-informed

- ▶ We took advantage of resident advisors to help us develop policy and procedure manuals that help us commit to being trauma-informed.
- ▶ We agreed to change our mentality around rules. We agree we only need one or two hard and fast rules to ensure safety. The rest is negotiable. Women tell us how they want to live and we help identify resources. We partner with women, not dictate how they will live their lives.

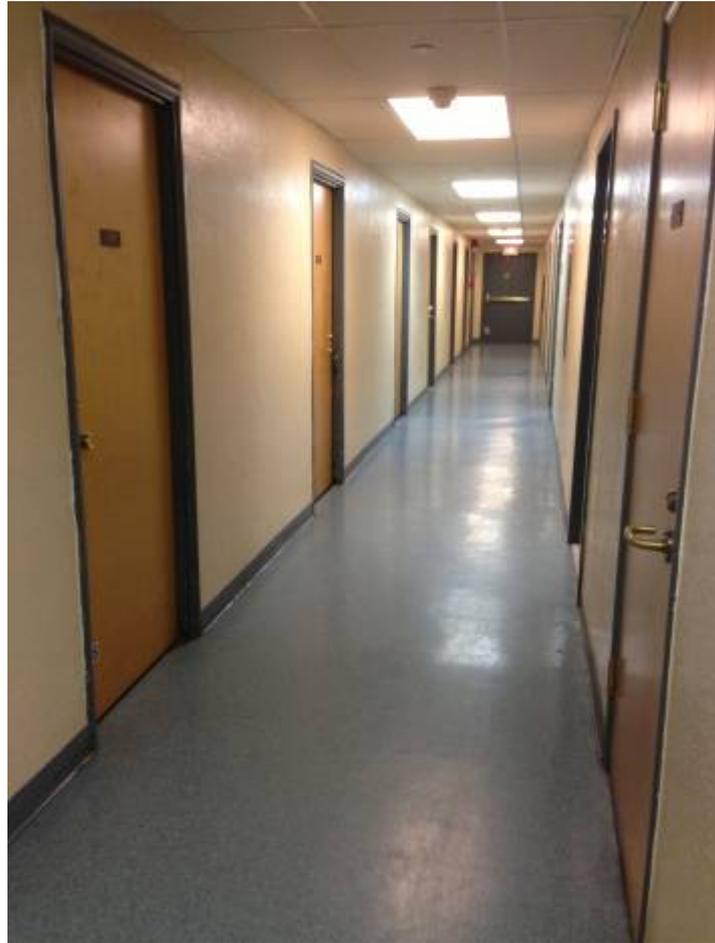
Ways the YWCA became Trauma-informed

- ▶ All programs operate with a lot of peer support. Women who are given respect will reciprocate. We share control.
- ▶ All staff use one data base so information can be shared between programs, reducing the need for multiple intakes. All staff are cross-trained.
- ▶ We tossed all of our old intake forms and have reduced the process to just a few pages. Intakes are conversational and paperwork is limited. We sit at tables, not desks.
- ▶ We are not voyeuristic about past trauma experiences. It is not necessary for future planning. Signs of trauma will come out during discussion and if we recognize trauma, we partner with clinical providers.

Ways the YWCA became Trauma-informed

- ▶ We are working with community leaders to develop a coordinated response to homelessness/supportive housing and information sharing so women only have to tell their story once.
- ▶ We are building collaborative relationships with other agencies so we can offer many options to women.
- ▶ We are training other agencies about initiatives that are trauma-informed.
- ▶ We prioritize wellness in our organization. This is becoming part of our culture and helps us do our jobs better.

The residence



RULES! RULES! RULES!



Imagine if you had 3 children and worked full-time during the day. You are assigned to room 447.



The community room



Our attempt



Flexibility/openness



Welcoming!



Possibilities

*Though no one can go back
and make a brand new start,
anyone can start from now
and make a brand new
ending.*

Carl Bard

