

# Trauma informed care: An essential approach in mental health treatment

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## ABSTRACT:

*Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is an approach that acknowledges the prevalence and impact of trauma on individuals and integrates this awareness into mental health treatment and service delivery. The increasing recognition of trauma's widespread influence on both physical and mental well-being has led to significant shifts in the healthcare system. TIC offers a framework to ensure that healthcare professionals understand the effects of trauma, promote safety, empowerment, and healing, and avoid re-traumatization. This article discusses the core principles of Trauma-Informed Care, its applications across various settings, and its importance in fostering resilience among individuals who have experienced traumatic events. It also explores the role of TIC in emergency mental health contexts and its alignment with current practices aimed at improving human resilience.*

**KEYWORDS:** Trauma-Informed Care, Mental health, trauma, Resilience

## INTRODUCTION

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) has emerged as a critical framework in mental health and healthcare settings, particularly as the understanding of trauma's impact continues to evolve. The prevalence of trauma in the general population, from childhood abuse to adult experiences of violence or loss, means that a significant number of individuals seeking healthcare have histories of trauma. This broad recognition has necessitated a shift in how healthcare systems engage with individuals. Trauma-Informed Care is grounded in the principle that trauma is a universal experience, and its effects can be long-lasting, impacting an individual's ability to trust, feel safe, and engage in healthy relationships (Berliner L, 2016).

At its core, TIC is an organizational and clinical model that seeks to avoid re-traumatization while providing compassionate, supportive care that promotes recovery. It goes beyond simply addressing trauma in clinical practice; it involves creating a system-wide culture that supports trauma survivors, emphasizing safety, choice, and empowerment (Bruce MM, 2018). The principles of TIC are particularly relevant in mental health and emergency care settings, where individuals in crisis may be more vulnerable to

retraumatization due to their heightened state of emotional distress. Thus, understanding and integrating trauma-informed practices are essential for fostering trust, safety, and effective therapeutic outcomes.

## UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:

The foundation of Trauma-Informed Care rests on understanding the various forms of trauma individuals may face and the ways in which trauma impacts the body and mind. Trauma can arise from a single event or from repeated experiences over time. It may involve physical harm, emotional or psychological abuse, or exposure to severe stress. Importantly, trauma is subjective, meaning its impact differs from person to person based on their prior experiences, resilience, and support systems (Decandia C, 2015). This recognition is central to TIC, as it emphasizes that each individual's response to trauma may be unique and that care must be tailored to the individual's specific needs.

Trauma-Informed Care is built on several key principles: safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural, historical, and gender awareness. These principles are intended to create a healthcare environment that does not further harm individuals but instead fosters healing by recognizing and addressing the trauma history of the individual (Forkey H, 2021). For instance, establishing physical and emotional safety within healthcare settings is a crucial first step in implementing TIC. Without this sense of security, individuals with a trauma history may have difficulty engaging with care or may experience additional psychological distress. Trauma-Informed Care is built on several key principles: safety, trustworthiness, peer support, collaboration, empowerment,

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and cultural, historical, and gender awareness (Hodas GR, 2006). These principles are intended to create a healthcare environment that does not further harm individuals but instead fosters healing by recognizing and addressing the trauma history of the individual. For instance, establishing physical and emotional safety within healthcare settings is a crucial first step in implementing TIC. Without this sense of security, individuals with a trauma history may have difficulty engaging with care or may experience additional psychological distress (Huckshorn K, 2013).

**ROLE OF TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IN EMERGENCY MENTAL HEALTH:** The application of Trauma-Informed Care becomes particularly critical in emergency mental health settings, where individuals are often experiencing acute stress, crisis, or trauma-related symptoms. In such high-pressure environments, healthcare providers are tasked with addressing immediate mental health needs while avoiding further harm that could exacerbate the individual's trauma (Kimberg L, 2019). The high-stress nature of emergencies can make individuals more vulnerable to feeling overwhelmed, unsafe, or invalidated. Thus, embedding TIC principles into emergency care practices is vital for both short-term relief and long-term recovery. In the context of emergency mental health, TIC emphasizes creating an environment where individuals feel respected and safe despite the chaos. This can include clear communication about procedures, offering emotional support, and ensuring that patients feel heard and understood. Furthermore, TIC encourages providers to take into account the individual's background and the possible trauma they may have faced, particularly in crisis situations such as natural disasters, violence, or accidents. Mental health professionals working in emergency settings are often the first to encounter individuals in distress, and their ability to apply TIC can make a significant difference in preventing further psychological harm (Muskett C, 2014). By integrating TIC principles into their practice, emergency responders can create a more compassionate and effective treatment environment that promotes healing from the onset of care.

**CHALLENGES AND BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE:** Despite the proven benefits of Trauma-Informed Care, several challenges remain in its widespread implementation. One major barrier is the lack of adequate training for healthcare providers and staff. While many mental health professionals are familiar with trauma and its impacts, applying trauma-informed principles requires a shift in mindset and approach. It also requires organizational support and a commitment to systemic change, which can be difficult in healthcare systems that are already overburdened or under-resourced (Oral R, 2016).

Another significant barrier is the challenge of addressing cultural and structural issues within healthcare settings.

For TIC to be effective, healthcare environments must be culturally responsive and sensitive to the diverse needs of individuals from different backgrounds. This includes acknowledging the ways in which historical trauma, discrimination, and systemic inequalities impact individuals' experiences of healthcare and mental health treatment. Ensuring that care providers are equipped to engage with these complexities is crucial for creating an inclusive and effective trauma-informed environment (Reeves E, 2015).

## CONCLUSION

Trauma-Informed Care represents a paradigm shift in how healthcare providers engage with individuals who have experienced trauma. It moves away from traditional, deficit-based models of care and toward an approach that recognizes the complexity of trauma and seeks to create safe, empowering, and supportive environments. Particularly in emergency mental health settings, TIC is vital for ensuring that individuals receive the compassionate care they need without further harm or re-traumatization. While the implementation of TIC faces certain challenges, its benefits in promoting healing, resilience, and recovery are clear. As awareness of trauma's impact continues to grow, the integration of TIC principles will likely become a cornerstone of compassionate and effective mental health care.

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