

What does it mean to be Trauma-Informed? (Part 1 of 2)

PUBLISHED ON

September 17, 2019

Laws and policies pertaining to trauma-informed education are moving at a rapid pace in Pennsylvania and across the country. The Barley Snyder Education Practice Group will bring you up to speed on what your district needs to know about trauma-informed education in this two-part series on what it takes for a district to be trauma-informed, both legally and educationally.

With trauma-informed education now mandatory in Pennsylvania public schools, the state has devised a slew of requirements and recommendations to help schools implement their own trauma-informed program.

The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency recently provided resources and advice for implementing trauma-informed education in its Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan. The commission administers school safety grants and supports the School Safety and Security Committee.

The Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan provides local educational agencies with minimum criteria and elements that they can and should tailor to their unique needs when applying for grant funding and implementing trauma-informed education.

Some components of the model plan are required, others are recommended.

Legislatively Required Components

- Designating an individual with certain qualifications to oversee implementation
- Coordinating between students, their families, community-based organizations, local government resources and schools to provide services
- Ensuring that those coordinated services are trauma-informed, which requires well-qualified and trained providers, culturally responsive practices, and a plan for addressing secondary trauma on school employees
- Using evidence-based approaches - requiring multiple data sources and levels, and also identifying responses through a data-driven approach
- Implementing professional development to foster a culture in which the entire school community is informed on how to understand, recognize and respond to trauma

Recommended Components

- Using the already existing multi-tiered system of supports to implement trauma-informed education
- Selecting a team to support the designated individual to oversee plan implementation
- Conducting a readiness assessment to gauge the current state of the district's policies, awareness and needs

The model plan is the most recent step in a series of responses to a [2018 Pennsylvania School Safety Task Force Report](#). The report found that a necessary component of improving school safety includes enhancing social and emotional instruction. That should be done by addressing the impact of [trauma](#) and improving coping skills and resilience. Beginning last year and before the legislative mandate requiring trauma-informed education that [came about through the latest state budget process](#), districts were permitted to apply for funding specifically for [trauma-informed programming](#) and [support services](#) under two separate grants administered by the commission on crime.

Its model mirrors the ACEs, trauma-informed education, resiliency and restorative practices guidance Barley Snyder Education Practice Group attorneys have been presenting on since 2017. If you have any questions on tailoring the Model Trauma-Informed Approach Plan to your school's unique needs, or on any other topic, please contact any member of the [Barley Snyder Education Practice Group](#).