Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit

National Center for School Safety

National Council for Mental Wellbeing
The National Center for School Safety (NCSS) is a Bureau of Justice Assistance-funded training and technical assistance center at the University of Michigan School of Public Health. As a multidisciplinary, multi-institutional center focused on improving school safety and preventing school violence, the NCSS team is composed of national leaders in criminal justice, education, social work, and public health with expertise in school safety research and practice. NCSS provides comprehensive and accessible support to Students, Teachers, and Officers Preventing (STOP) School Violence grantees and the school safety community nationwide to address today’s school safety challenges. NCSS serves as the national training and technical assistance provider for the STOP School Violence Program.

The National Council for Mental Wellbeing drives policy and social change on behalf of nearly 3,500 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults and families they serve. They advocate for policies to ensure equitable access to high-quality services and build the capacity of mental health and substance use treatment organizations. They also promote greater understanding of mental wellbeing as a core component of comprehensive health and health care.

Suggested Citation
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Using this Toolkit

The Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit outlines a framework for implementing these approaches in any school or school district. It utilizes tools, videos, professional development slide decks, and concise instruction to explain the concepts of trauma and toxic stress, offers individual and school-wide strategies for addressing trauma and fostering resilience for students, staff, and families, and to assess the impact of these adaptations throughout the school community.

The sections’ topics are presented in the order your school or district will likely start to address them. However, this is a continual process of implementation, assessment, and improvement. As such, it is likely that you will not fully complete activities in one section before moving to the next, and action steps of one section may influence action and understanding of another.

| Section 1 | Introducing Trauma and Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools | Creates shared understanding of core concepts and offers tools to encourage new mindsets about students, staff, and families |
| Section 2 | Universal Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Practices and Processes | Outlines school- and district-wide strategies to establish safe and secure environments and relationships |
| Section 3 | Building a Culture of Faculty and Staff Compassion Resilience | Explains the importance of promoting staff wellness through improved resources and policies as universal strategies of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools |
| Section 4 | Tier II and Tier III Interventions and Supports | Details specific approaches for multi-tiered systems of support |
| Section 5 | Engaging Parents, Families, and Communities | Outlines strategies for including and supporting parents, families, and communities in student-centered planning |
| Section 6 | Implementing and Evaluating Your Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Innovations | Explains how to build a system to continually evaluate the strengths and needs of your school |
| Section 7 | Educating During Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond—Recommendations for All Phases | Details the use of trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approaches in response to crises |
Action Steps structure each section and offer different approaches for understanding and utilizing the information. Implementation Tools, Alternate Learning Strategies, and Inclusion and Engagement Action Steps are designed to provide tangible activities to apply your learnings in your school or district.

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**Who Should Use this Toolkit?**

The primary audience for this toolkit includes: school administrators, school board members, teachers and student support staff, parents and families, and community partners. This toolkit recognizes the diversity of schools, districts, and communities and is designed to be applicable regardless of size, geography, and resources. Most resources included and citations referenced are free to use and in the public domain to prioritize accessibility. The authors understand that financial resources vary widely district-to-district, so each Action Step can be implemented with no or minimal additional funding needed.

It is recommended that each school or district form a core team to lead their trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools initiative. This team should consist of members who represent the diversity of the school community and are motivated and empowered to implement the Action Steps.

This toolkit is designed for adult learners, who:

» **Are autonomous and self-directed**: Implementation Tools for discussion, learning, and input from all adults involved in the school are offered.

» **Have a foundation of life experiences and knowledge**: This toolkit acknowledges the strengths each learner brings and encourages them to utilize them in the implementation of the material.

» **Are goal-oriented**: Action Steps provide clearly defined elements to learn, understand, and integrate into daily practice.

» **Are relevancy-oriented**: This toolkit offers guidance for elementary, middle, and high school settings; for teachers, staff, parents, families, and communities; and for programs with existing initiatives, such as PBIS, social and emotional learning, and multi-tiered systems of support.

» **Are practical**: Implementation Tools and Inclusion and Engagement Action Steps ensure learners can act on the information immediately.

» **Want to be shown respect**: This toolkit acknowledges that schools are experts on their own context and offers guidance to integrate into existing structures. It is strengths-based and acknowledges the incredible expertise and dedication educators, students, parents, and communities bring to their schools.
Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Action Steps Checklist

Section 1: Introducing Trauma and Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools
» Establish understandings of trauma, its impact, and prevalence in school communities
» Encourage new mindsets about students and their experiences of trauma and toxic stress
» Embed trauma-informed, resilience-oriented principles into all decision-making

Section 2: Universal Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Practices and Processes
» Adapt the physical school environment to foster safety and learning
» Utilize a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented lens to build relationships
» Implement resilience-building classroom strategies

Section 3: Building a Culture of Faculty and Staff Compassion Resilience
» Increase awareness and understanding of compassion fatigue, burnout, and compassion resilience
» Encourage wellness assessment and seek feedback from staff on resilient culture
» Implement individual and district-wide adaptations to promote resilience

Section 4: Tier II and Tier III Interventions and Supports
» Create student plans responsive to trauma and rooted in resilience-building approaches
» Adapt schoolwide discipline processes
» Implement targeted practices for Tier III supports

Section 5: Engaging Parents, Families, and Communities
» Apply a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented lens to parent and family engagement
» Identify and respond to needs of parents and families
» Build partnerships with families and community partners

Section 6: Implementing and Evaluating Your Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Innovations
» Establish a collaborative team to lead your trauma-informed, resilience-oriented schools initiative
» Engage in the implementation process
» Utilize a continuous quality improvement approach

Section 7: Educating During Crisis: The COVID-19 Pandemic and Beyond—Recommendations for All Phases
» Use a trauma-informed, resilience-oriented lens to plan and decide
» Undertake activities to put safety first
» Create support infrastructure for teachers and staff
» Implement classroom strategies to promote safety and connection
REFERENCES

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