

# The Effectiveness of Trauma-Informed Courts for Juvenile Substance Abuse

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## INTRODUCTION

- ❖ Trauma-informed courts can be an effective method to benefit juveniles' substance abuse rehabilitation.
- ❖ The broader term is trauma-informed care (TIC), which is integrating knowledge of trauma and incorporating it into child services (SAMHSA, 2014, as cited in Ghafoori et al., 2019).
- ❖ Understanding the relationship between trauma and substance abuse is essential for delinquent youth and their behavioural outcomes (Rosenberg et al., 2014).
- ❖ Attorneys can find this information valuable in advocating for their clients' cases to be heard in a trauma-informed court that will address traumatized youth.

## CURRENT RESEARCH

- ❖ Adolescents' treatment resistance and perception of treatment directly link to trauma symptoms they experienced (Markoff et al., 2005).
- ❖ One study showed that 94% of 350 incarcerated youth had experienced at least one trauma; disorder screening suggested 45.7% had PTSD, 49.4% had depression, and 61.2% experienced substance abuse (Rosenberg et al., 2014).

## CURRENT RESEARCH

- ❖ Complex PTSD correlates significantly with severe substance abuse (Rosenkranz et al., 2014).
- ❖ Research has indicated that counselors believe work can begin on relationships and emotional problems when alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse problems are addressed first (Markoff et al., 2005).
- ❖ Untreated PTSD symptoms from a history of child sexual abuse correlate with aggression, truancy, and substance abuse behaviours for girls in the justice system (Conrad et al., 2014).
- ❖ Difficulties with AOD and mental health link to trauma, and services, such as psychoeducation on trauma, mental health diagnosis, and treatment options, need integration (Markoff et al., 2005).

## BENEFITS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED COURTS

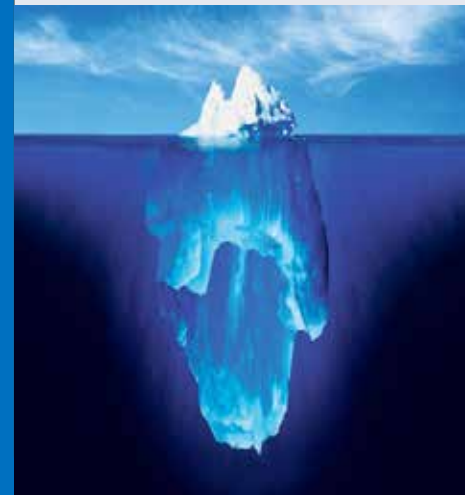
- ❖ Increasing knowledge of trauma-informed courts can improve the understanding of judges, attorneys, and law enforcement.
- ❖ Practices of a trauma-informed approach in a detention facility showed that it was useful for youth by placing children into appropriate treatment and providing safety and advocacy (Snyder, 2018).

## COMPONENTS OF TRAUMA-INFORMED COURTS

- ❖ Trauma-informed policies and procedures.
- ❖ Screening and clinical assessment of youth impacted by trauma.
- ❖ Clinical assessment and intervention.
- ❖ Trauma programs/treatment interventions.

## PRINCIPLES OF TRAUMA-INFORMED COURTS

- ❖ Safety
- ❖ Trustworthiness
- ❖ Transparency
- ❖ Peer Support
- ❖ Collaboration and Mutuality
- ❖ Empowerment: Voice & Choice
- ❖ Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues



## FORENSIC IMPLICATIONS

- ❖ Juvenile court personnel, including judges, attorneys, probation officers, caseworkers, and forensic psychologists, should acknowledge the importance of trauma as part of recovering from substance abuse.
- ❖ Attorneys should advocate for their adolescent clients' cases to be heard in a Trauma-Informed Court to best manage and reduce trauma symptoms and substance abuse.
- ❖ Utilize educational materials to make informed choices for attorneys' clients.
- ❖ Implement education and training opportunities that promote trauma-focused information, and understanding trauma and rehabilitation.

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