



ChildSavers

Trauma Response

ChildSavers Trauma Response provides **FREE** trauma treatment to children ages 2-17.

Childhood trauma doesn't have to last a lifetime.

The Impact of Trauma on Children and Adolescents

The work of a Richmond City Public School counselor extends beyond the limits of school. School counselors consider the impact of each student's home and community environment in order to fully understand their academic, behavioral and emotional needs. Unfortunately, children and adolescents in our community are often exposed to violent and traumatic events while away from school. Without proper interventions these events can affect school performance and leave a lasting and negative impact.



Parents and school personnel are often the first to notice the symptoms of trauma.

Exposure to trauma affects behavioral, emotional and psychological functioning.

Therapeutic interventions can reduce the impact of trauma.

Trauma Defined

The DSM-IV-TR describes trauma as an event, "that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person."¹ This definition has limitations because trauma can occur over a prolonged period of time in situations such as child abuse and interpersonal, domestic, and community violence.

In the United States, 1 million children and adolescents are the victims of substantiated child abuse and neglect each year (U.S Department of Health and Human Services Administration on Children, Youth and Families, 2005). Consider also that in Richmond 88% of children hear gunfire near their homes and 25% witness someone shot by gunfire.² Many of your students do not experience

trauma as a single event but instead are exposed to chronic trauma.

Trauma's Impact

Traumatic symptoms which you may have witnessed children displaying at school include but are not limited to:

- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyperactivity
- Regressive behaviors
- Withdrawal from others

Despite the fact that the above symptoms also occur with ADHD, treatment interventions for ADHD will not suffice for the traumatized child.

According to Fairbank (2008), "Children exposed to trauma, especially multiple experiences are particularly vulnerable to a range of psychological, behavioral and emotional problems, social



View from our clinic

***"I can be changed by
what happens to me,
but I refused to be
reduced by it."***

--Maya Angelou

maladjustments, and academic failures."³ These problems can persist into adulthood. A study by Kaiser Permanente confirmed that there is a significant connection between childhood trauma and depression, substance abuse, and domestic violence into adulthood.⁴

During a traumatic event a hormonal system in our bodies reacts by releasing the potent hormone cortisol. While cortisol is useful during trauma it is toxic to certain regions of the brain. Research on children and adults has shown that damage to the brain caused by cortisol results in problems with emotional regulation, impulse control, rational thinking, and socialization.⁵ Within the school setting these effects have implications on a child's learning, behavior and social skills. Therapeutic interventions focus on establishing safety, creating a trauma narrative, and the integration and mastery of mind and body.

ChildSavers Trauma Response

Our Trauma Response program is the City of Richmond's only program devoted to immediate response and trauma counseling services for children exposed to trauma. Our services are free of charge to any child or adolescent between the ages of 2-17 who has experienced a recent traumatic event. With permission from the parent or guardian, school counselors can call ChildSavers and provide initial intake information. A Trauma Response clinician will contact the family immediately in order to meet with the family.

With Your Help

As counselors you have the unique opportunity to recognize trauma

symptoms and ensure that children receive appropriate care. Without appropriate clinical interventions traumatic events can have lasting and significant negative effects on children and adolescents. Emotional health, school performance and the development of appropriate social skills suffer as a result of these impacts. With your help ChildSavers Trauma Response can reduce the consequences of traumatic exposure of children in your school.

Additional Resources

Check out these websites for more information about childhood trauma:

www.nctsn.org (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

www.ncptsd.va.gov (National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder)

www.traumacenter.org (Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute)

www.childtraumaacademy.org (The Child Trauma Academy)

References

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3. Fairbank, J. (2008) The Epidemiology of trauma and trauma disorders in youth and families. *PTSD Research Quarterly, 19* (1), 8.
4. van der Kolk, B.A. (2005) Developmental trauma disorder: Toward a rational diagnosis for children with complex trauma histories. *Psychiatric Annals. 35*(5), 401-408.
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