



# Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center

April 2025

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## #NeedToKnow

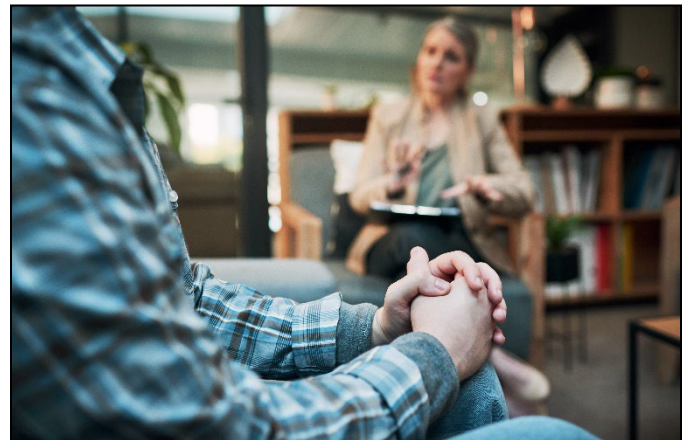
### Applying Trauma-Informed Care to Support Justice-Involved People

Trauma manifests differently for each person, but common physiological responses occur either during or after a traumatic event. The Substance Use and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) reports these responses include but are not limited to activation of the fight-or-flight response, difficulty thinking clearly, and making impulsive decisions.

A significant number of people who are navigating the justice system have a history of trauma. According to SAMHSA, understanding trauma and its impact on cognition and behavior is crucial when working with this population.

For people with a history of trauma, the autonomic nervous system may become dysregulated. While it is meant to protect us, significant or repeated trauma can result in the autonomic nervous system frequently malfunctioning and signaling danger, even when no real threat exists.

Living in this state of survival can be debilitating. To cope with physiological and emotional discomforts stemming from trauma, some people may adopt unhealthy behaviors such as substance use, alcohol use, overeating or



overworking to bring regulation and temporary relief. People may also develop cognitive distortions or have difficulty with emotional regulation, which can negatively impact the development or maintenance of healthy relationships.

SAMHSA has developed six principles for trauma-informed care to support positive outcomes for people involved in the justice system. By integrating these principles, justice-involved systems can support recovery, reduce re-traumatization and improve outcomes for those affected by trauma.

## **The Six Principles for Trauma-Informed Care**

**1. Safety.** Establish a physically and emotionally safe environment to reduce triggers and give people a sense of control. For example, ensure waiting areas in service settings are well-lit, non-threatening and designed to minimize distressing stimuli.

**2. Trust and Transparency.** Build trust by fostering honest communication, ensuring consistency and clearly explaining processes and decisions. For example, caseworkers should provide clear timelines and expectations for service provision.

**3. Peer Support.** Create connections with others who have experienced trauma through peer mentoring programs or support groups are encouraged. A peer support specialist with lived experience can provide encouragement and model healthy coping strategies.

**4. Collaboration.** Engage people in decision-making processes that affect their lives. For example, allowing a person to have input into their reentry plan after incarceration demonstrates respect and empowerment.

**5. Empowerment and Choice.** Support trauma survivors in sharing their experiences and making informed decisions. A community-based program offering different therapy options (e.g., cognitive behavioral therapy, group therapy) allows people to choose an approach that best meets their needs.

**6. Humility and Responsiveness.** Recognizing and respecting cultural differences helps foster a trauma-informed approach within systems. For example, offer multilingual services, employ diverse staff, and incorporate culturally relevant practices in treatment and support programs.

For more information, visit:

- [Trauma-Informed Approaches and Programs \(SAMHSA\)](#)

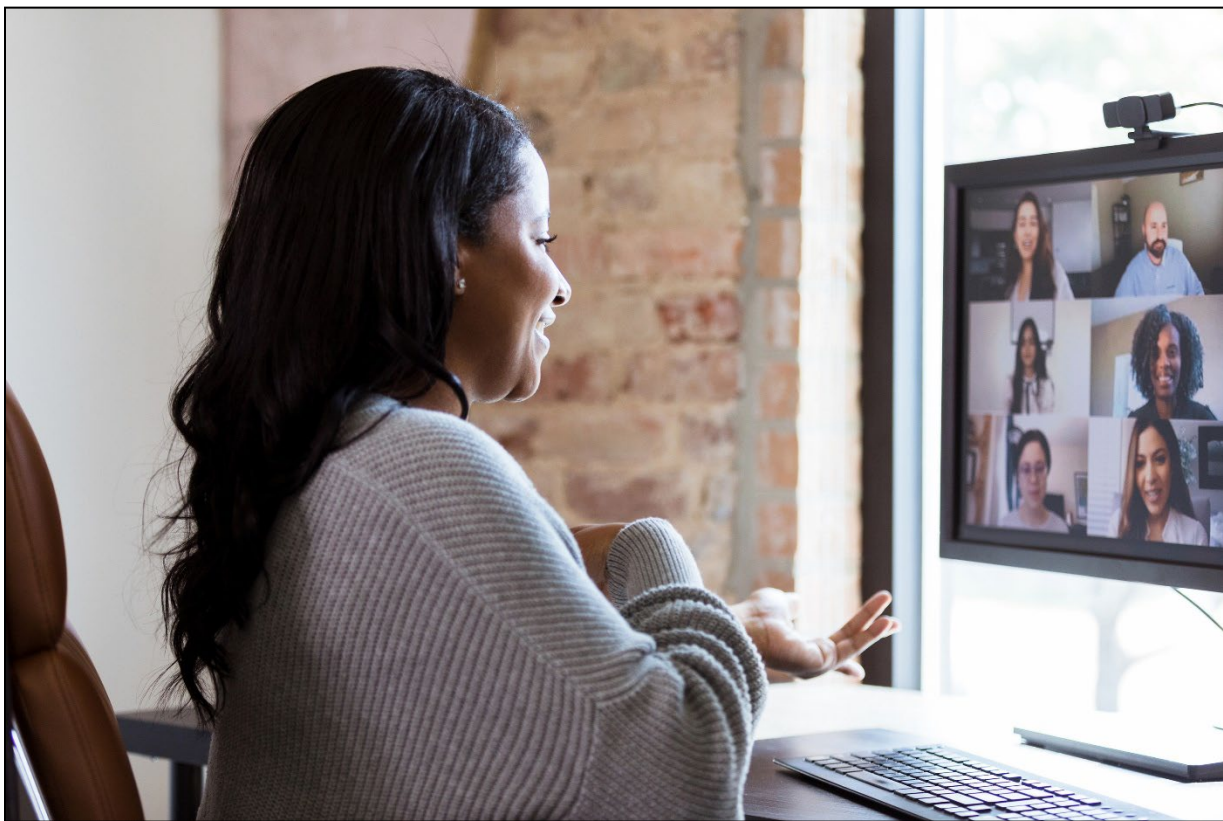
- [Trauma-Informed Care \(Texas Health and Human Services\)](#)

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is offering a trauma-informed care webinar on Wednesday, April 30, from noon to 1:30 p.m. Join Holly Fullmer, a trauma-informed care training specialist from Adult Mental Health, as she presents valuable information on this important topic.

**Register for the Upcoming [Webinar](#)**

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#TechnicalAssistance



**Need help? The Forensic and Jail Diversion Service team is standing by.**

The Texas Behavioral Health and Justice Technical Assistance Center (TA Center) provides timely guidance and connections to stakeholders across Texas on a variety of behavioral health and justice topics. Reach out to the TA Center today to receive tailored support and troubleshooting for issues big and small.

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