

# MODULE

# 11

## TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE IN ADVOCACY

Building upon the foundation of trauma-informed care that was discussed earlier in the training, this module offers a brief review of the concepts of trauma-informed care, deepened with concrete examples of what this means for an advocate's work.

### *Applying trauma-informed theory to practice*

**LESSON 1: Trauma-informed practices in advocacy**

**LESSON 2: Advocacy in action**

**LESSON 3: Trauma-informed care and ourselves**



### OBJECTIVES

#### Participants will be able to:

- Describe examples of what trauma-informed care looks like in advocacy services
- Explain the benefit of a trauma-informed approach to advocacy services
- Describe different settings in which advocacy takes place



### MATERIALS

- Training agenda (if you create one)
- Flipchart paper or dry erase board and markers
- Pens/pencils and paper for each trainee
- Copies of [Throw Away the Menu: Broadening Advocacy Services](#)
- Computer with screen, projector, internet, and audio (optional)



### TIPS FOR PREPARATION

- Review and become familiar with all materials in this section
- Make copies of handouts for participants



### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- **Explain trauma-informed approaches in practical terms.**

This section deepens participants' understanding of trauma-informed care by taking a closer look at what a trauma-informed approach looks like in advocacy practices. Be sure to review the material in prior sections on trauma-informed care and connect these elements to the practical ways advocates support survivors.

- **Trauma-informed care spans all settings and situations.**

Reiterate the importance of understanding trauma-informed care as the framework that spans all services and settings. Trauma-informed care is not simply used on the helpline when speaking with a caller, but is also the approach embodied when tabling at an event, facilitating an educational program, assisting a survivor in a medical setting, and working with a survivor who is struggling years after sexual violence has taken place.

## LESSON 1: TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES IN ADVOCACY

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This section will provide a more in-depth look at trauma-informed care in practice. Remind participants that in an earlier section we covered the fundamentals of trauma-informed care and looked at some of the key elements. In this section, we will build upon the basics to take a closer look at what trauma-informed care looks like in advocacy.

**To review, the key aspects of trauma-informed care are:**

- Safety
- Trust
- Choice
- Cultural relevance
- Collaboration
- Empowerment

**In this section, we will also consider the importance of the following aspects of advocacy:**

- Survivor-led
- Relevant
- Trauma-informed
- Mobile

Advocates embody these elements through their attitudes and actions when working with survivors.

Provide participants a copy of “Throw Away the Menu: Broadening Advocacy Services” and ask them to read the short guide. Allow at least 30 minutes for participants to complete their reading. Encourage participants to jot down any notes or questions that they have throughout their reading.

After everyone has finished reading, ask the group to reflect on what stuck out for them. Let the group know that in the next section you will work through the scenarios in the guide together. Consider posing questions to the group such as:

- ***What new did you learn from the reading?***
- ***Did anything surprise you in the reading? If so, what?***
- ***Do you have questions about anything you read?***

Participants may have questions about how the article applies to your program's advocacy practices. Use this discussion as an opportunity to highlight the advocacy program's unique practices and approaches. Consider including information about the program's offerings and how they are built using a trauma-informed framework. For example, describe different collaborations, the settings where advocacy takes place, how the program strives to provide relevant services, and its focus on empowerment. Allow time for questions from participants before moving on to the next section.

## LESSON 2: ADVOCACY IN ACTION

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As a large group, read the scenarios and reflect on the advocacy practices in each. The scenarios are available in the “Throw Away the Menu” guide that was provided to participants. Have participants take turns reading a scenario, and then answer this question as a large group or in small groups:

- *In what ways does this action reflect values of trauma-informed care?*

### ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 1

Last month, an advocate finished a six-week educational series at the local residential center for homeless youth. A call came in to the advocacy program today from a staff member at the residential center who expressed concern that a teen said something in passing over lunchtime that made the staff member think he may have experienced sexual abuse. An advocate asked if she could speak with the teen via phone and the teen agreed. During the call, the advocate asked the teen if he was interested in meeting and he agreed, but seemed concerned that his peers at the center might find out. The advocate assured the teen that she would not share any information with other residents at the shelter. She asked the teen to select a location where he would be most comfortable meeting. She reassured him that he could share as much or as little as he was comfortable and that she would review limits to her confidentiality when they met so he could make an informed decision about what he wished to share.

#### Possible responses include:

- Advocate established relationships and an environment where a sense of trust was built between the local residential center staff and advocacy staff
- Advocate is working to establish trust with survivor
- Advocate is working to establish safety with survivor
- Advocate listened to the survivor’s concerns and addressed them
- Advocate emphasized the survivor’s choice by informing him of his options
- Advocate supports survivor’s autonomy in decision-making and right to privacy
- Advocate works to provide survivor with information so he can make an informed decision about what’s best for him

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 2

In supporting survivors in a predominantly Spanish-speaking region, a program works collaboratively with survivors to start a weekly cooking group that helps to build community and connection among participants. This approach was rooted in awareness that establishing peer support and connection was a culturally relevant approach to supporting survivors in healing.

### Possible responses include:

- Advocacy program offers culturally relevant services
- Advocacy program is collaborative
- Advocacy program values connection as a means of healing
- Advocacy program demonstrates understanding of value of community in healing

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 3

Advocacy staff partner with a local soup kitchen bi-weekly. They get to know the volunteers and frequent patrons of the soup kitchen. They have information and resources available and talk with volunteers and patrons about the work of the program.

### Possible responses include:

- Advocacy program builds meaningful relationships in the community
- Advocacy program builds trust in the community
- Advocacy program values collaboration
- Advocacy program makes advocacy services accessible
- Advocacy program increases opportunities to learn about needs in the community

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 4

A survivor stayed after a community awareness event and asked the advocate staff if they had a moment to talk. She shared how grateful she was to be present for the event, but that it brought some things up for her. She explained that her uncle, the person who repeatedly assaulted her, recently passed away and that she felt relieved and maybe even happy, but that she felt terrible for feeling that way. For nearly a decade after the abuse ended, she struggled with an eating disorder and depression. She described “getting to a much better place” over the last several years, but was worried because she found herself restricting food and feeling sad and hopeless the last few weeks. She laughed between tears and said “You must think I’m crazy to still be a mess over this.”

The advocate responded, “It sounds like you have done your very best to cope with what happened. I don’t think you’re crazy at all. It can be frustrating, but for many survivors, the impact of trauma can be felt in waves, less at some times and more at others. It sounds like you’re using what you know to try to cope. Would you be interested in setting a time to meet so we can talk more?”

### **Possible responses include:**

- The advocate has created environment where the survivor felt safe to disclose
- The advocate conveys understanding of impact of trauma over time
- The advocate uses easy to understand language when talking with survivor
- The advocate normalizes survivor’s experience
- The advocate is non-judgmental
- The advocate asks if survivor would like to set a time to talk more

### **ADVOCACY IN ACTION: SCENARIO 5**

During a weekly meeting with a survivor, the survivor indicated she’s dreading her upcoming custody hearing regarding her children. Anything involving the court system is a trigger and prompts memories of the ongoing sexual violence she experienced in foster homes as a child.

The advocate asked the survivor what would be helpful in dealing with this stress. The survivor asked the advocate if she could help her write something she could share at the custody hearing. The advocate agreed and offered to take notes as the survivor talked about the points she wanted to share at the hearing. The survivor indicated this would be helpful and asked the advocate if she can be present at the hearing. The advocate agreed to be there as a support.

### **Possible responses include:**

- The advocate was supportive of the survivor’s self-identified needs.
- The advocate supported the survivor as the best expert on her own experiences.
- The advocate collaborated with the survivor to meet the survivor’s needs.
- The advocate has awareness that trauma often has an impact that spans over time and understands that the custody hearing could be a triggering situation for the survivor.

## ADVOCACY IN ACTION: WORKSHEET

### ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 1

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## ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 3

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## ADVOCACY IN ACTION SCENARIO 4

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## LESSON 3: TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND OURSELVES

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Trauma-informed care asks for a universal understanding that trauma has a deep impact and requires care that is both anticipatory of and responsive to individuals' unique needs. Trauma-informed care does not ask for a one-size-fits-all approach, but rather that we are able to meet people where they are at, with awareness of the profound impact trauma may have had on them. We, as advocates, do our best job of meeting people where they're at when we show up genuinely, with empathy and non-judgment. This activity invites you to reflect inward and consider how you, yourself, will embody a trauma-informed approach to your work. Provide participants with a copy of the "Trauma-Informed Care and Ourselves" reflection handout. Ask participants to individually reflect on the questions in the handout. Let participants know they will have an opportunity to share with the group.

After participants finish their reflections, invite participants to share with the group. Highlight themes that come up and draw the connection to trauma-informed care.

# TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE AND OURSELVES

## REFLECTION

*What values do you bring to advocacy? How might these show up in your work with survivors?*

*What will you prioritize in your work with survivors?*

*What support will you seek for yourself?*

*What would you like to learn more about to strengthen your advocacy skills?*

