

Creating Caring Communities

An Overview



Building a community wide system to support children who are homeless and their families

Prepared for CLNkids by
Teaching Solutions NM



Acknowledgements

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Strengthening Families Initiative

all of the unidentified colleagues who have worked with us over the years to
develop many of the handouts

Thank you for your work on behalf
of children and families in New Mexico!

Policy for Use of Materials

We have developed these materials drawing on the work of many esteemed colleagues in our various disciplines – both academic and in the field. We are eager to share their knowledge and our methods. Permission is granted to quote, copy and use these materials as long as credit is given to *Teaching Solutions NM* and *CLNKids* and additional information is provided on how to participate in *Creating Caring Communities*, an initiative supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information and a copy of the initiative flier visit the Creating Caring Communities website on SHARE New Mexico:

<http://www.sharenm.org/communityplatform/newmexico/earlychildhood/earlychildhoodinitiative4>



Creating Caring Communities

Who? You! Because all of us working in our communities encounter children and families who have experienced trauma.

What? This initiative invites us to align our efforts to build community-wide systems addressing the needs of children and families who have experienced homelessness and related trauma.

Why? Together we can create a community system of support that can break the cycle of poverty, instability, violence, and poor health and give every child a chance to thrive.

How? Professional development workshops engage participants with current research and with each other, to explore ways to improve individual, organizational and community efforts to support this population.

When? Participate in one of three no cost/low cost workshop offerings (see reverse side) and become part of a learning community with ongoing support. Be part of the solution!

Contact: Angela Merkert at angelam@clnkids.org or 505.843.6899 or Molly Grady at mmlwow@aol.com or (505) 280-4701

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Trauma – Resilience -- Change

Workshop Descriptions

Overview – a two-hour workshop that introduces the materials and methods used in the workshop series, described below. Participants will be able to identify how the CLNKids workshop modules can inform their practice and engage them as part of a system of support for vulnerable families. **No Cost**

Complete Workshop Series - Five sessions, each 2.5 hours, which address the following:

Module I: Foundations

- What do we know about children, families and the impact of homelessness and other sources of trauma?
- What interventions are effective in supporting children and families who have experienced trauma?
- How does this translate into our work with young children and families?

Module II: Building Resilience

- What role does resilience play in our work?
- How do we help children, families and ourselves build resilience?

Module III: Reflective Practice and Change

- What is reflective practice and why is essential in supporting resilience and change?
- How can and your colleagues develop reflective practice and improve your work?

Module IV: Organizational Capacity

- What organizational structures, attitudes and policies does your organization have in place to work effectively with families experiencing homelessness? What is not in place?
- How does your organization ensure physical and emotional safety for clients and staff?
- Does your organization have effective processes for successful transitions into and out of your care?

Module V: Building a Caring Community

- How do we help create community-wide change, building on what is already happening?
- We can't do this alone; who can help and how? How do we engage “uncommon allies?”

Materials Fee: \$10 per person

Facilitator Workshop - A three-day session for those who want to be able to provide the workshops to their staff and/or interested community members. The workshop begins with the premise that teaching is a dynamic interaction between teacher and learner. Facilitators will explore ways to engage participants in a variety of situations and to deepen their understanding of the material.

Materials Fee: \$10 per person

Interested? Contact Angela Merkert at angelam@clnkids.org or 505.843.6899 or Molly Grady at mmlwow@aol.com or 505-280-4701

Creating Caring Communities An Overview

Learning goal: Participants will be able to identify how the CLNKids training modules can inform their practice and explore potential ways to be a part of a system of support for vulnerable families.

Prime the Brain: Prime to shift perspective and apply information to new situations: finding the common elements of seemingly different objects

Definitions

- **trauma** - a dramatic or very difficult life experience that changes one's sense of safety and self
- **trauma-informed practice** - an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives. It is a shift from "What's wrong with you?" to "What has happened to you?"
- **strength based approach** – policies and practices that identify and work in partnership to build upon the strengths of children, families and communities, recognizing the resilience of individuals rather than their limits
- **resilience** - being able to manage life's misfortunes and experience success despite exposure to adversity
- **protective factors** - conditions or attributes in individuals, families, organizations and communities that mitigate or eliminate risk in families and communities and increase the health and well-being of children and families
- **reflective practice** - the capacity to reflect on action so as to engage in a process of continuous learning
- **trauma-informed organizations** - organizations which incorporate an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma and the paths to healing and recovery; seek "safety first" and avoid retraumatizing
- **community collaboration** - a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve results they are more likely to achieve together than alone.

Video - Building Adult Capacities

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/

Research

- Traumatic Stress and Brain Development: Multiple, recurring stresses impact long term health, economic, and cognitive outcomes
- Protective Factors: Early childhood professionals can help build resilience through their practice and interactions with clients
- Reflection and Change: Emotional safety is critical to learning and changing
- Trauma-Informed Organizations: Organizational policies and practices can enhance or diminish the effectiveness of services to children and families who have experienced trauma
- Community Networks: Community-wide networks that use a collective impact model have been shown to have a significant impact on their community

Major Tasks

- Continue to learn about trauma informed practice
- Understand the change process as it relates to your work
- Commit to reflecting and learning with other members of your organization
- Connect with others to create caring communities

Outcomes: Call to Action

- Participants understand the practice of trauma informed care and how it can mitigate or exacerbate the impact of adverse childhood experiences
- Adults develop necessary skills to support healthy development in children
- Organizations and individuals create a culture of kindness
- Organizations begin to network and find ways to build caring communities

Discussion Question

What insights from today can inform your practice and move us toward caring communities?

What's Next?

- Determine what supports are needed to continue moving forward.
- Participate in the full workshop series; consider becoming a facilitator.
- Explore ways your organization might participate in Creating Caring Communities.

Homelessness in New Mexico

Who is Homeless?

- One-third of all people who were homeless in Albuquerque on January 30, 2011 were in families with children.
- In 2011, **at least** 20,000 children and youth were homeless in New Mexico; at least 11,000 in Albuquerque.
- More than 40% of homeless children and youth are under the age of 6; at least 8,500 in New Mexico and at least 4,500 in Albuquerque.
- Families with young children are the fastest-growing population of homeless.

Why are Children and Families Homeless?

- Poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the principal causes of family homelessness.
- One in four New Mexican children are poor.
- One-fifth of all jobs do not keep a family of four out of poverty.
- In New Mexico, a minimum wage earner must work 73 hours per week, 52 weeks per year to afford to rent a two-bedroom apartment.
- Nationally, 63% of homeless women have experienced domestic violence; at CLNKids, 75% of its families experienced domestic violence.
- Mothers experiencing homelessness struggle with health and mental health issues; about 50% experience severe depression; over one-third have a chronic physical health condition.

What are the Consequences of Homelessness for Children and Families?

- Homelessness is an extremely stressful, traumatic and potentially dangerous experience, especially for young children.
- By age 12, 83% of homeless children have been exposed to at least one serious violent event.
- Homeless children are four times more likely to have health problems; twice as likely to go hungry; three times more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems; nearly half have problems with anxiety, depression and withdrawal.
- Moving about in search of shelter disrupts the education of children: fewer than 25% of homeless children graduate from high school.
- Adult family members also suffer from ill health and depression; one-third of homeless mothers have made at least one suicide attempt.
- Homelessness breaks up families; 30% of foster care children could return home – if they had a home; 30% of homeless adults in the U.S. were foster children; these adults are twice as likely to have their own children placed in foster homes.

Source: CLNKids, <http://www.clnkids.org>

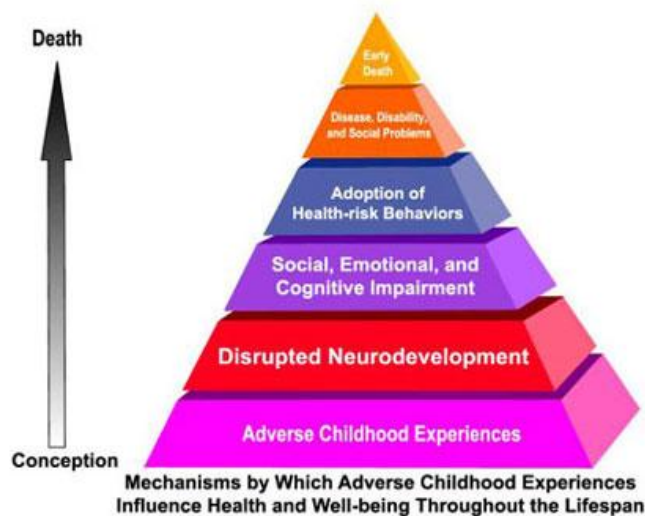
Traumatic Stress and Brain Development

Multiple, recurring stresses (adverse early childhood experiences) impact long term health, economic, and cognitive outcomes.

Research Summary

- Long-term, serious physical, emotional and mental problems are associated with chronic and/or traumatic stress.
- Multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACE) have a cumulative effect with life-long health implications.
- Environment impacts body chemistry.
- When presented with a perceived threat, the body releases stress hormones that prepare the body for a “Fight, Flight or Freeze” response.
- Chronically high levels of cortisol, a stress hormone, can physically change the brain.
- Family poverty is associated with increased parental depression, spousal and parent-child conflict, and ineffective parenting.
- Racial discrimination can be a chronic source of trauma in the lives of children from minority or excluded groups.
- **Homelessness is different** from other stressful family situations in that there is a high risk for traumatic experiences as a result of high mobility and unsafe environments.
- Resolving trauma and grief can break the generational cycle of abuse and neglect.

Impact of Adverse Childhood Experience on Lifelong Development



Source: *The Permanente Journal* (Winter, 2004)

Video: *Toxic Stress Derails Healthy Development*

Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/three_core_concepts/toxic_stress/

Protective Factors

Early childhood professionals can help build resilience through their practice and interactions with children and families.

Protective factors are the building blocks of resilience. They serve as buffers to challenges or adversity, helping us, young and old, find resources and supports, and to develop coping strategies under stress. Successful interventions when working with vulnerable families must both reduce risk factors and promote protective factors to ensure the well-being of children and their families.

Jack Shonkoff and others emphasize that good nutrition and a safe physical environment are the foundation on which healthy growth and development take place.

- **Good nutrition** promotes good health which is essential to brain development and problem solving
- **A safe physical environment** protects family members from harm and allows children to explore and learn

Research then identifies **six protective factors** as key elements in supporting and enhancing child and family well-being:

- **Nurturing and attachment:** a stable, nurturing relationship can have life-long benefits and can be passed on to future generations.
- **Knowledge of parenting and child development:** accurate information about child development and appropriate expectations help parents see their children in a positive light and promote healthy development.
- **Parental resilience:** the ability to find ways to solve problems, learn to build supportive relationships, and how to seek help, makes it possible for parents to bounce back from all types of challenges.
- **Social connections:** having friends, family, neighbors, and community for emotional support, advice, and concrete assistance are a real asset for families in crisis.
- **Concrete supports:** access to adequate services and supports, such as housing, food and transportation, allows families to survive a crisis.
- **Social and emotional competence:** the ability to interact positively with others, self-regulate behavior and communicate feelings appropriately leads to success for adults and children, no matter what their circumstances.

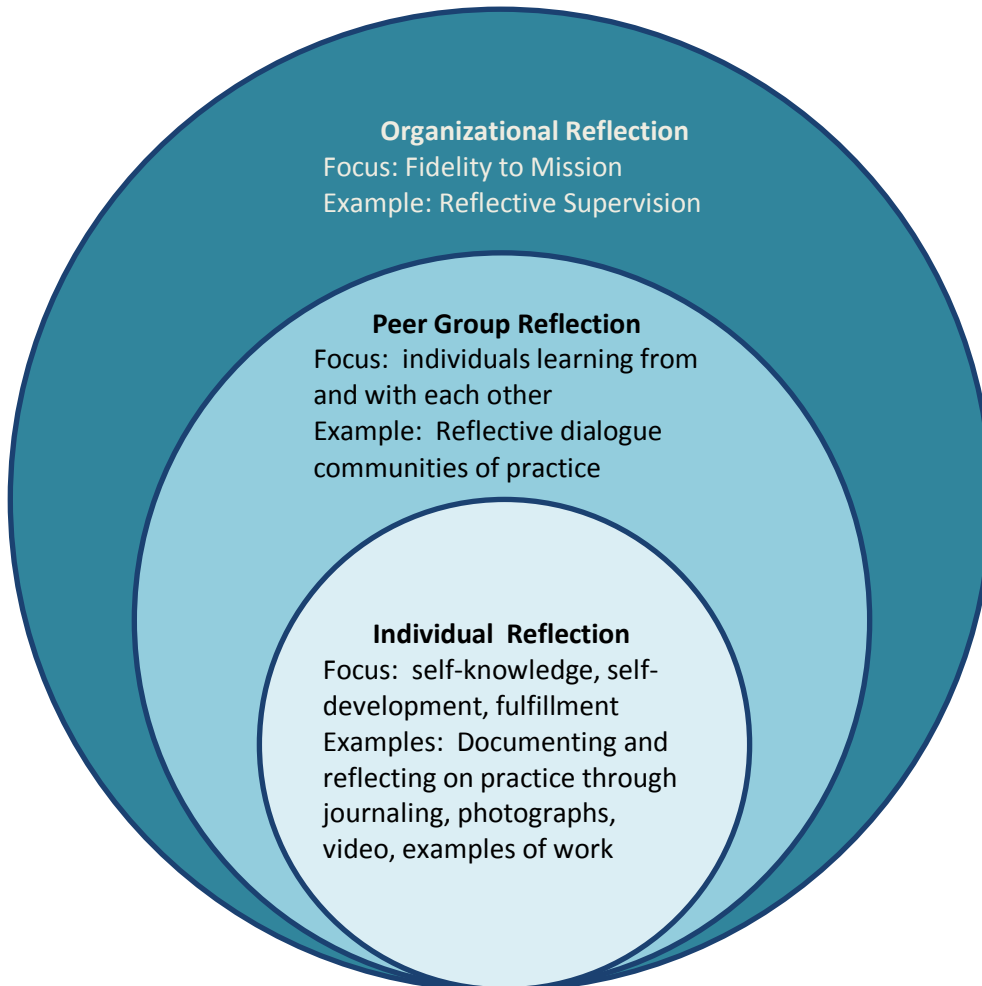
Your work is to engage families in understanding and developing these skills, connections, supports, and knowledge. You are helping children and families build resilience by strengthening these protective factors.

Levels of Reflective Practice

“Reflective Practice” includes a variety of informal and formal methods of documenting, examining and learning from one’s own and others’ behavior and the habits or processes of an organization. “Reflective Supervision” is a specific practice used in many professional situations and requires training and organizational commitment.

Reflective practice can occur at several levels, from individual reflection to reflection at the organization or even community level. All require: a commitment of time and space; skills to engage in intra- and interpersonal dialogue; an atmosphere of trust that encourages questioning and risk-taking.

Research shows reflective practices to be tremendously valuable for personal, professional, and organizational development. In fact, it may be very difficult to make any changes to habits and behavior without some form of formal or informal reflection.



Trauma-Informed Organizations

Organizational policies and practices can enhance or diminish the effectiveness of services to children and families who have experienced trauma.

Research Summary

- Trauma is pervasive: between 55-99% of us have experienced at least one traumatic event, with an average of 5 traumas per lifetime.
- Trauma has often occurred in the service context itself, often by unintentionally “triggering” traumatic memories and responses.
- Trauma affects staff members as well as consumers. “Secondary” trauma and “burnout” or “compassion fatigue” can occur.
- Service providers may be reluctant to address trauma, lack confidence in their ability to deal with resulting behaviors or emotions, or fear that their own trauma histories will be triggered.
- Training, ongoing reflective supervision, consultation and support are needed to create and sustain trauma-informed organizations.
- Trauma-informed organizations can intervene early, provide or refer to immediate and concrete assistance, avoid further trauma and support healthy development.

Core Values of a Trauma-Informed Organization

- Safety
- Consistency, predictability, trustworthiness
- Open and respectful communication
- Choice, collaboration and empowerment
- Confidentiality
- Cultural awareness

Organizational Elements Impacting Capacity

- Shared vision
- Strong, effective leadership
- Resource development (human, financial, physical, information resources)
- Effective internal and external communication
- Culture of reflective practice
- Commitment to continuous improvement, training and staff development



http://www.createthefuture.com/Capacity_Building.htm

Community Networks

Community wide networks that use a collective impact model have been shown to have a significant impact on their community.

Research Summary

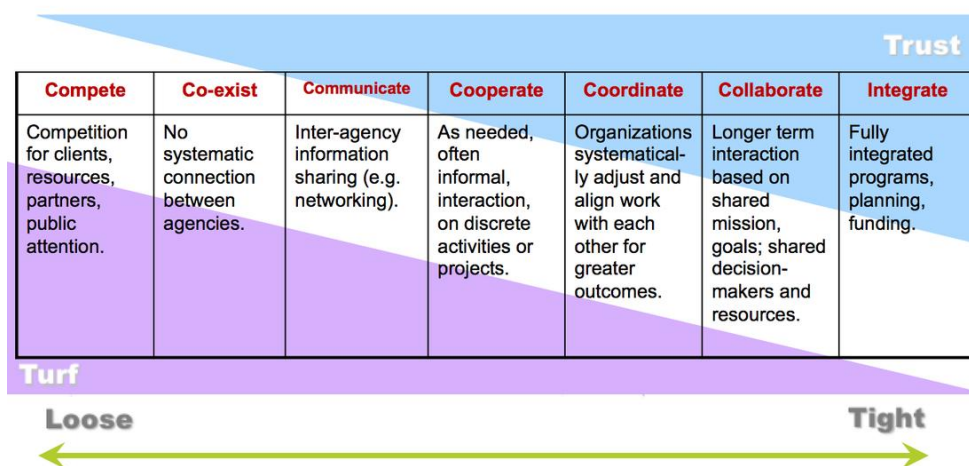
- Communities can either support or undermine family functioning.
- Community collaboration increases resources available to children and families AND to organizations.
- Community collaboration is most helpful for vulnerable and at-risk children and families.
- Community-wide networks that work toward a common vision and mission, coordinate their efforts, share resources, jointly monitor progress towards goals, and communicate effectively and often have been shown to have a significant impact on positive, community-wide change.

Essential Elements for Collective Impact

- **Common Agenda:** All participants have a shared vision for change, a common understanding of the problem, and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
- **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Each participating organization does what it does best, coordinating with the action of others, so that all efforts contribute to an overarching plan.
- **Shared Measurement:** collecting data and monitoring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
- **Continuous Communication:** Frequent, open and transparent communication over time builds the trust that is essential for successful community-wide collaborative efforts.
- **Backbone Support:** The expectation that collaboration can occur without a supporting infrastructure is one of the most frequent reasons why it fails. A dedicated staff separate from the participating organizations can help plan, manage and support the initiative.

Source: Kania, John and Kramer, Mark (2011) Collective Impact. Stanford Social Innovation Review (Winter), pp. 36-41. Available at: http://www.ssireview.org/articles/entry/collective_impact

The Collaboration Continuum



Source: Tamarack Institute, <http://tamarackcommunity.ca/>

Making a Change

Change requires someone, somewhere to start acting differently.

Research Summary

- Effective change requires a balance between emotional arousal and rational consideration; possible pathways to change are shaped by the environment.
- Breaking a large problem into smaller problems enables a series of “small wins” that sustains momentum, attracts allies and counters opponents.
- Individuals often get demoralized when tackling difficult tasks alone, but members of groups seem better able to remain optimistic in the face of difficulties and setbacks.
- Every community has both challenges and resources; employ the resources to address the challenges
- The path to changing complex social problems is unpredictable and emerges from the ongoing interaction of actors and environment

HOW TO MAKE A SWITCH

Sell it rationally

- Know where we’re going and why it’s worth it
- Identify what’s working well and do more
- Script the critical moves in terms of specific behaviors or actions

Engage emotions

- Knowing something isn’t enough to cause change. Make people experience and feel something
- Break the change strategy into “small wins”
- Cultivate a sense of identify and instill a “growth” mindset: we can become the change we want to see

Shape the path

- When the situation changes, the behavior changes, so change the situation
- Build habits or “good ruts” to keep us on the path
- Rally the community and work together
- The path will change; concentrate on a strong beginning and ending and get moving

Sell it rationally.

Engage emotions.

Make it easy.

Adapted from: Heath, Chip and Heath, Dan (2010). *Switch: How to change things When Change is Hard*. New York: Broadway Books

Additional Resources

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, Center for Disease Control and Prevention.

Website: <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/>

Bringing the Protective Factors to Life in Your Work. Free on-line training. National Alliance of Children's Trust and Prevention Funds. Website:

<http://www.ctfalliance.org/onlinetraining.htm>

Building Adult Capabilities to Improve Child Outcomes: A Theory of Change. Harvard University Center on the Developing Child. Video (5:19) Website:

[\(http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/multimedia/videos/theory_of_change/)

Change the First Five Years and You Change Everything. The Ounce. Video: (3:56). Website:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GbSp88PBe9E>

FSG. *Collective Impact*. Website:

<http://www.fsg.org/KnowledgeExchange/FSGApproach/CollectiveImpact.aspx>

Galinsky, Ellen. *Mind in the Making: The Seven Essential Life Skills Every Child Needs*. New York: William Morrow and Company. 2010. Website: <http://mindinthemaking.org/>

Grady, Molly and Wendy Wintermute. *Building a Community-Wide System of Support for Vulnerable Children and Families: The Cuidando Model*. Albuquerque, NM: CLNKids, 2012.

Heath, Chip and Heath, Dan. *Switch: How to Change Things When Change is Hard*. New York: Broadway Books, 2010. Website: <http://heathbrothers.com/resources>

Lester, B.M., A.S. Masten, and B.S. McEwen. Resilience in Children. Vol. 1094. New York: *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2006.

National Center on Family Homelessness. Research and resources for practices and policies

Website: <http://www.familyhomelessness.org>

Nurtured Heart Approach: Inspiring greatness in all children. Children's Success Foundation.

Website: <http://difficultchild.com/nurtured-heart-approach/>

Reflective Practice and Program Development. Zero to Three. Website:

<http://www.zerotothree.org/about-us/areas-of-expertise/reflective-practice-program-development>

Sanctuary Model. Website: <http://www.sanctuaryweb.com>

Strengthening Families: A Protective Factors Framework, Center for the Study of Social Policy.

Website: <http://www.cssp.org/reform/strengthening-families>