

# Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment (TIOA) Informational Packet

## What is Trauma-Informed Care and Why Does It Matter?

Trauma-informed care (TIC) occurs when all parties involved recognize and respond to the impact of traumatic stress on those who have contact with the organization, including children, caregivers, and service providers. Trauma-informed organizations infuse and sustain trauma awareness, knowledge, and skills into their organizational cultures, practices, and policies. Collaborating with all those who are involved with the child and using the best available science will maximize physical and psychological safety, facilitate the recovery of the child and family, and promote and support staff well-being. The NCTSN Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment (TIOA) helps to assess the degree to which organizations are enacting trauma-informed care.

The impact and influence of childhood trauma can vary widely. For some children – often those with greater supports and resources and who receive appropriate treatment – traumatic experiences can be integrated, resolved, and may even lead to growth. For other children, these experiences may lead to a wide range of emotional, social, and behavioral problems. When left untreated, those problems can affect the brain and nervous system and increase high-risk behaviors. Research shows that adults who experienced trauma when they were children can be more likely to have serious long-term health problems and even die at an earlier age. Organizations that serve children have an opportunity and an obligation to identify those suffering from the effects of child trauma and help them receive the appropriate programs and treatment as early as possible, to prevent those potential negative health outcomes, and promote a child's ability to thrive.

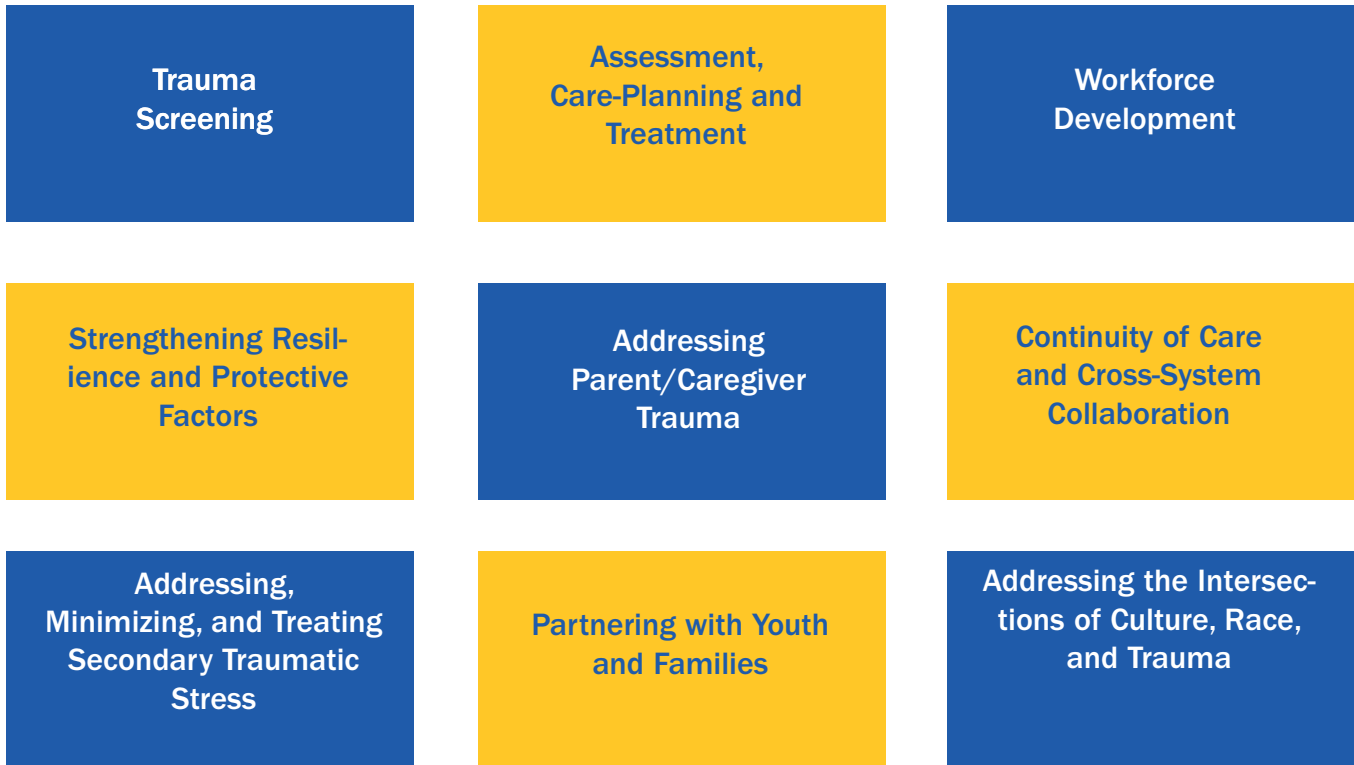
Working with children and families who have experienced trauma can be extremely satisfying and fulfilling, but many providers also experience secondary traumatic stress. Hearing about and working with populations that have been traumatized can take a serious toll on staff's well-being. Practicing trauma-informed care provides organizations with an opportunity to fulfill their obligation to support staff by preventing and addressing the impact of secondary trauma.

## What Is the NCTSN Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment (TIOA)?

The NCTSN Trauma-Informed Organizational Assessment (TIOA) is a tool created by the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress (NCCTS) to help organizations assess their current practices in the context of serving children and families who have experienced trauma. Recommendations and guidance from the TIOA help organizations identify, implement, and sustain trauma-informed practices. Results from the assessment drive change that facilitates the child and family's recovery, supports their ability to thrive, and maximizes physical and psychological safety. Initial testing shows that the domains of the TIOA exhibit excellent internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha ranging from 0.92 to 0.95) and stability.

The NCTSN TIOA is derived from the NCTSN definition of a [Trauma-Informed Child and Family Service System](#), which is based on collaborative work from a diverse group of NCTSN members with trauma and systems-change expertise.

Their work identified nine areas, or domains, that are key to creating a trauma-informed program or organization. The nine domains of the NCTSN TIOA are:



The items in the TIOA have been developed and refined by combining current research with NCTSN expertise, which includes families, youth, direct service providers, administrators, trainers, researchers, and intervention developers who work across child welfare, juvenile justice, education, healthcare, and mental health systems. **The assessment is intended for any organization that serves children and families.**

## What Does the NCTSN TIOA Look Like?

The TIOA includes eight to twelve items within each of the nine domains. It is expected to take roughly 30-45 minutes for each individual to complete. Each domain is a separate section that includes a definition and respondents are asked to rate each item on a five point scale ranging from “this practice does not exist within our organization” to “this practice is institutionalized and part of how the organization does things all the time.” Below are some sample items from the Screening Domain of the TIOA.

  
RATING

8. The organization ensures that children, youth, and families are connected with timely trauma assessment when the trauma screening indicates the need.

  
RATING

9. The organization ensures that staff at all levels receive supervision to guide the screening process, communication of results, and planning.

## Why Might Your Organization Be Interested in Using the NCTSN TIOA?

The NCTSN TIOA is intended for any organization that serves children and families, regardless of sector, and was designed to:

- 1 Measure where your organization is at a given point in time
- 2 Create a common language around trauma-informed care within your organization at all levels of staff
- 3 Provide guidance for creating a common language around trauma-informed care within your broader community of child- and family-serving agencies
- 4 Bring to light important areas for your organization to address related to trauma-informed care
- 5 Create a roadmap for organizational change related to trauma-informed care
- 6 Identify specific NCTSN tools, resources and strategies to help your organization better serve children and families who have experienced trauma
- 7 Identify specific tools, resources and strategies to help your organization support staff working with children and families
- 8 Assess progress and improvement over time

## How is the NCTSN TIOA Different from Existing Trauma-Related Organizational Assessment Tools?

There are many existing tools available to help organizations assess various aspects of their work related to trauma. The NCTSN TIOA was developed specifically as a tool that is:

- Free and available online
- Anchored in organizational behaviors and practices
- Specific to child-serving organizations
- Relevant across child-service systems
- Based on what can be done at the practice, programmatic, and organizational levels
- Based on NCTSN experience and expertise as well as valid and reliable test development strategies
- Linked to NCTSN resources
- Situated within an implementation framework in order to support organizational change
- Useful for all stages of implementation of trauma-informed care
- Informed by two lenses throughout: partnerships with family and youth, and the intersections of culture, race, and trauma

## Prior to Using the NCTSN TIOA

Prior to beginning the assessment process, the organization as a whole should consider the following key process questions:

Will the assessment be completed individually or by programs/teams?

Will items be rated based on an individual program, geographical region, or the entire organization?

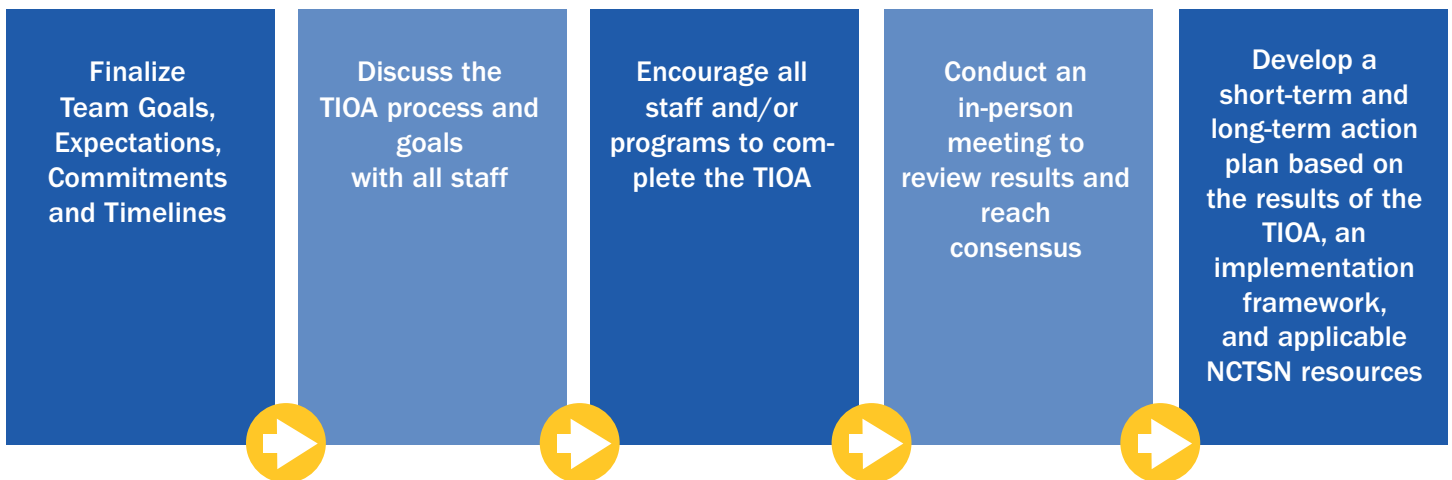
How will responses be collected?

How will responses be used?

## How Will Our Organization Use the NCTSN TIOA?

In addition to carefully testing the actual items included in the TIOA, the process of using the TIOA has also been tested and refined. The first step in completing the TIOA is to form an Assessment Team. The composition of this team will vary by organization, but the goal is to include members who have a range of experiences and perspectives across the organization. Having team members with direct service experience is just as important as having team members with authority to affect organization-level change.

Once a team has been comprised, the suggested steps to complete the NCTSN TIOA are to:



## Integrating Youth and Family Voice

A critical component to organizational assessment and change is the integration of the voices of those who are directly served and impacted. Organizations using the TIOA should identify how the organization will partner with youth and families to carry out the assessment and organizational change process. Youth and families can be integrated in a variety of ways: as assessment team members; to provide input on key organizational strategic questions; to review and respond to agency evaluation findings; and to collaborate on change processes.

## How Can My Organization Participate?

For inquiries about using the NCTSN TIOA as a part of implementing more trauma-informed practice, please contact [TIOA@nctsn.org](mailto:TIOA@nctsn.org).