

TRAUMA-SENSITIVITY IN THE MEDICAL HOME

What is Trauma?

Trauma is a single or series of events or a set of circumstances that cause emotional and or physical stress to individuals and families.

Trauma is a single or series of events or a set of circumstances that overwhelms an individual's ability to cope appropriately.

Examples of trauma¹:

- Neglect
- Physical or sexual abuse
- Separations
- Violence between caregivers
- Natural disasters
- Accidents
- Racial Discrimination
- Housing Insecurity

Impacts of Trauma on Learning:

- Decreased reading levels and school performance
 - Childhood trauma can diminish concentration, memory, organizational skills, and language abilities → which can lead to: problems with academic performance, inappropriate behavior in the classroom, and difficulty forming relationships.²
- Increased school absences
 - Students traumatized by exposure to violence have been shown to have more reported absences from school than other students.³
- Physical and emotional symptoms

¹ <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/adoption-and-foster-care/Pages/Parenting-Foster-Adoptive-Children-After-Trauma.aspx>

² <https://traumasensitiveschools.org/trauma-and-learning/the-problem-impact>

³ <http://www.nctsn.org/resources/audiences/school-personnel/effects-of-trauma>

Behaviors Indicative of Exposure to Trauma in Children, by Elementary Age Group	
Preschool Students (Ages 3-5)	Elementary Students (Ages 6-12)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Separation anxiety or fear caregiver will not return ● Regression of mastered skills (e.g. language, problem solving) ● Tiredness from difficulty sleeping ● Absenteeism ● Overreactions to loud noises, physical contact, sudden movements ● New fears ● Questions about death or dying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anxiety or worry for safety of self and others ● Decreased focus and concentration ● Withdrawal from activities ● Angry outbursts and aggression ● Absenteeism or declining school performance ● Inappropriate response to social cues ● Difficulty with authority

What Can You Do?

Creating a Caring Space

1. *Promote safety and encourage children and families to establish routines*
2. *Provide stress management and relaxation resources for children and their families⁴*
3. *Use empathy when talking with children about their feelings, behaviors, or experiences*
4. *Talk with the teachers, if possible, about incorporating caring spaces in the classroom*
5. *Refer children and families who you know or suspect have experienced trauma to mental health and other supportive services*
6. *Help parents recognize their own responses to the same trauma or previous traumatic events, which may affect their capacity to establish safe and nurturing environments for their children.*

⁴ http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/adhd_and_child_traumatic_stress_final.pdf