

**'JUST GET OVER IT'
JUST ISN'T ENOUGH:
TOWARD A CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK FOR TRAUMA-
INFORMED CARE**

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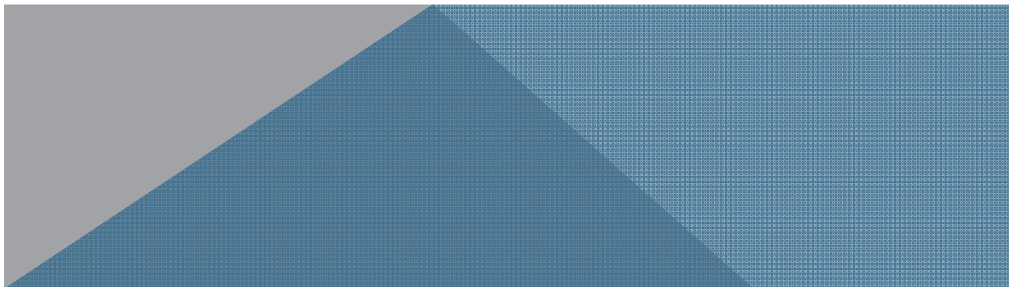
THINKING ABOUT BIG QUESTIONS

- To what degree (if any) are courts responsible for identifying and considering trauma as part of case decisions?
- What does trauma-informed practice mean? What does it look like in practice?

THE BASICS: WHAT WE KNOW

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

- Infant brain development sets the stage for future learning
- Interactions form foundation of brain architecture
- Creates neural connections between multiple areas of the brain; helps build emotional and cognitive skills





THE CONTINUUM OF STRESS

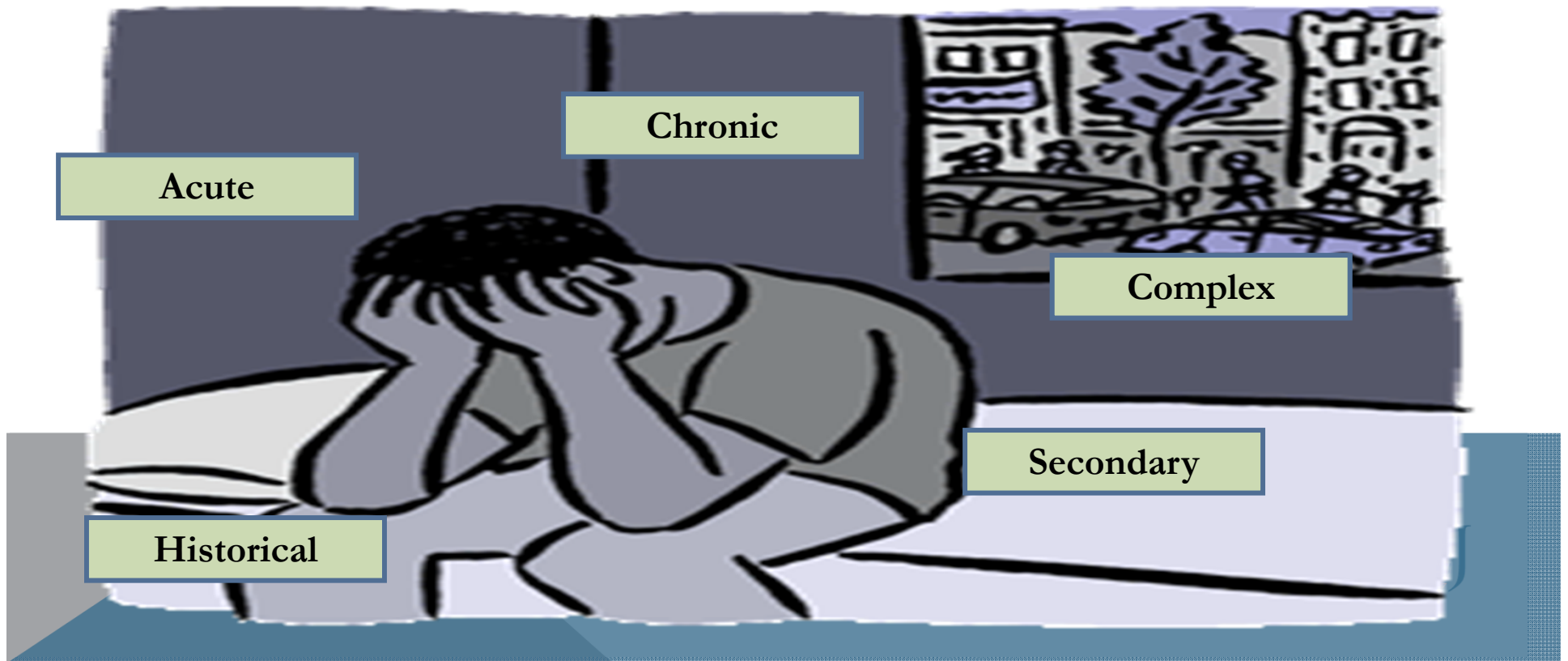
Stress \neq Trauma

- Good stress
- Stress is tolerable
- “Toxic stress”
- Traumatic stress



TRAUMA

An emotional response to a terrible event.



TRAUMA LEADS TO A ROBUST FIGHT OR FLIGHT RESPONSE



CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY: A PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

- Adverse Childhood Experiences study (ACE)
 - www.acestudy.org
 - 10 ?'s

Abuse

Physical

Sexual

Emotional

Neglect

Physical

Emotional

Household Dysfunction

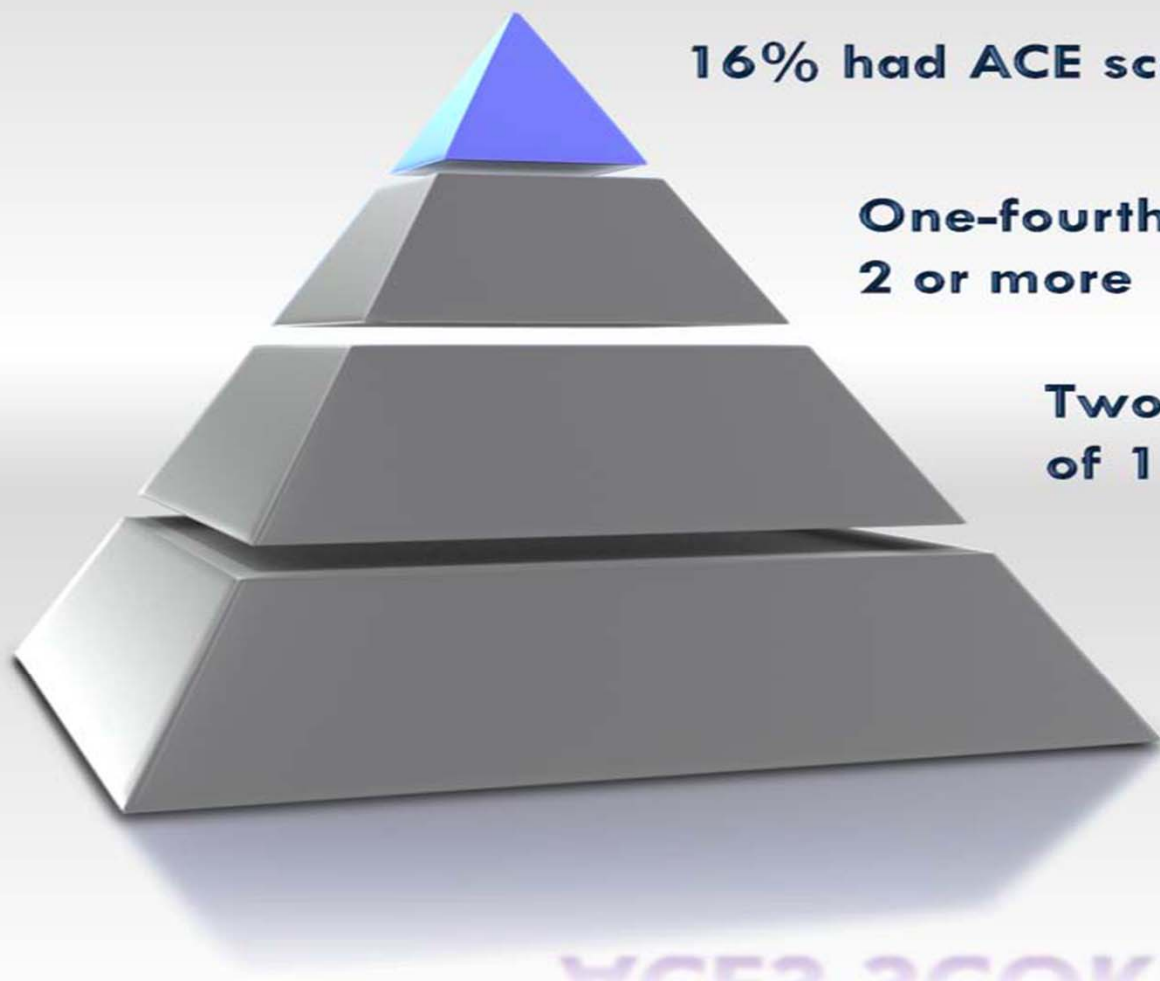
Domestic violence

Mental illness

Incarceration

Substance abuse

Divorce



16% had ACE score of 4 or more

One-fourth had ACE score of 2 or more

Two-thirds had ACE score of 1 or more

One third had 0 ACE score

ACES 4+

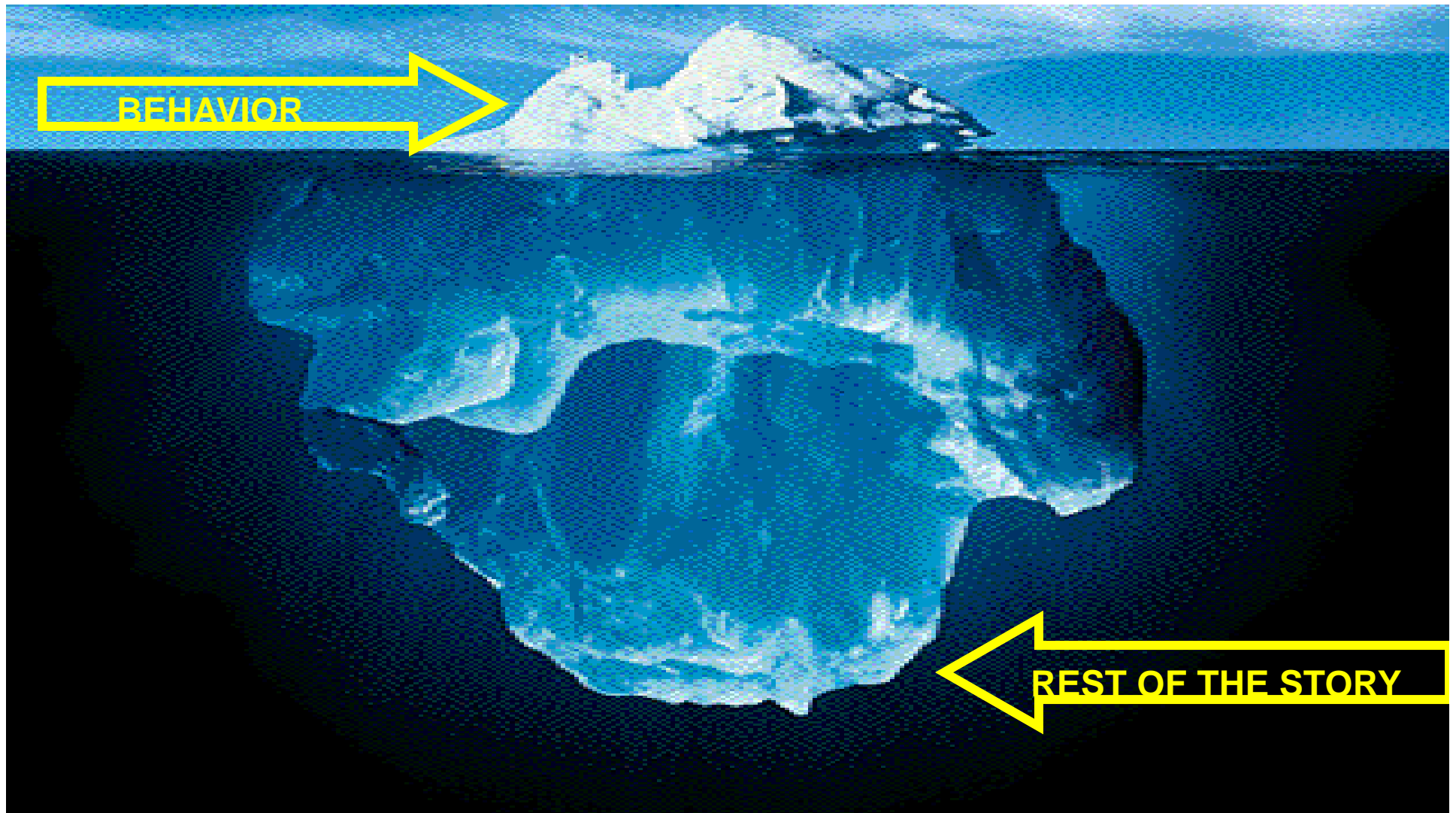
- Twice as likely to smoke
- Seven times more likely to be alcoholics
- Six times more likely to have had sex before the age of 15
- Twice as likely to have been diagnosed with cancer
- Ten times more likely to have injected street drugs
- **Twelve** times as likely to have attempted suicide

	Infants	Preschool Age	School Age	Adolescents
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fussy Decreased responsiveness Trouble sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggression Behavior problems Irritability Trouble sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggression Conduct problems Disobedience Regressive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dating violence Delinquency Truancy Running away
Social		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stranger anxiety Trouble interacting with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fewer peer relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Early sexual activity Increased risk for teen pregnancy
Emotional/ Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attachment needs not met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear/anxiety, worry PTSD Feeling unsafe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fear, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem PTSD Limited emotional response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Substance abuse Depression Suicidal ideation PTSD Rage, shame
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inability to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Self-blame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Distracted, inattentive Academic problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short attention span Defensive

WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Hurt people
***hurt* people.**

Context Matters.



James is a 13 year old Caucasian male

He entered mental health treatment 4 months ago when he and his mother were in the battered woman's shelter.

Mom was with her boyfriend Don for 6 years. Don nearly killed mom on 4 occasions through strangulation. He threatened to kill James and his mom with a gun from his extensive gun collection. Don physically abused James.

James visits his dad who is living with an angry women who abuses alcohol. She emotionally abuses James and his dad. They have been living together for 3 years.

James has been suspended from school for stabbing a kid with a pen, cussing out his teacher, refusing to follow rules, and fighting with his peers.

He has nightmares, is afraid to sleep alone, constantly calls his parents when he is away from them, he worries someone will kill mom or dad.

WHAT IF ALL YOU KNEW WAS...

**James cusses at his teachers,
starts fights with other youth,
and he recently stabbed a
classmate at school?**

WHAT YOU SEE DEPENDS, IN PART, ON HOW YOU
ARE LOOKING AT IT...



WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT IT?

OUR APPROACH

- Universal precautions approach
- Understanding that judges are part of community (that could be a community of healing)
- Judges have a unique opportunity to work with families and communities to promote conditions of healing

CREATING THE CORE CONDITIONS OF HEALING

- Safety
- Agency /Self-determination
- Social connectedness

(1) SAFETY = ✂ TRAUMATIC REMINDERS

When faced with something that reminds them of traumatic events, people may experience intense and disturbing feelings tied to the original trauma.

These “trauma reminders” can lead to behaviors that seem out of place, but were appropriate — *and perhaps even helpful* — at the time of the original traumatic event.



(2) AGENCY = ↑ SELF-DETERMINATION

If traumatic stress arises out of choice being “stolen” from a person, then successful interventions must be grounded in giving choice back to that person.

(3) CONNECTEDNESS = ↗ RESILIENCY

Resiliency is the capacity to thrive in the face of adversity, and is believed to be a function of risk and protection across ecological domains.

“An important characteristic of resilient children is having at least one significant adult in their lives.”

Linda F. Winfield

COURTS ARE PART OF A HEALING COMMUNITY...

It is hard to create healing environments when families/staff/institutions/communities do not feel safe, are not engaged or do not have a sense of control, and are traumatized themselves.

CREATING A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT SYSTEM

- The Trauma “Audit”
- 20+ sites
- Formative work

WORKING DEFINITION OF TRAUMA-INFORMED COURTS/JUSTICE

NCJFCJ preliminarily defines “trauma-informed” court/system to mean a system in which environments, practices, policies, and persons limit unnecessary stress and promote healing in those who have been trauma-exposed, to include court consumers *and* court professionals.

EXAMINING TRAUMA IN THE COURTHOUSE

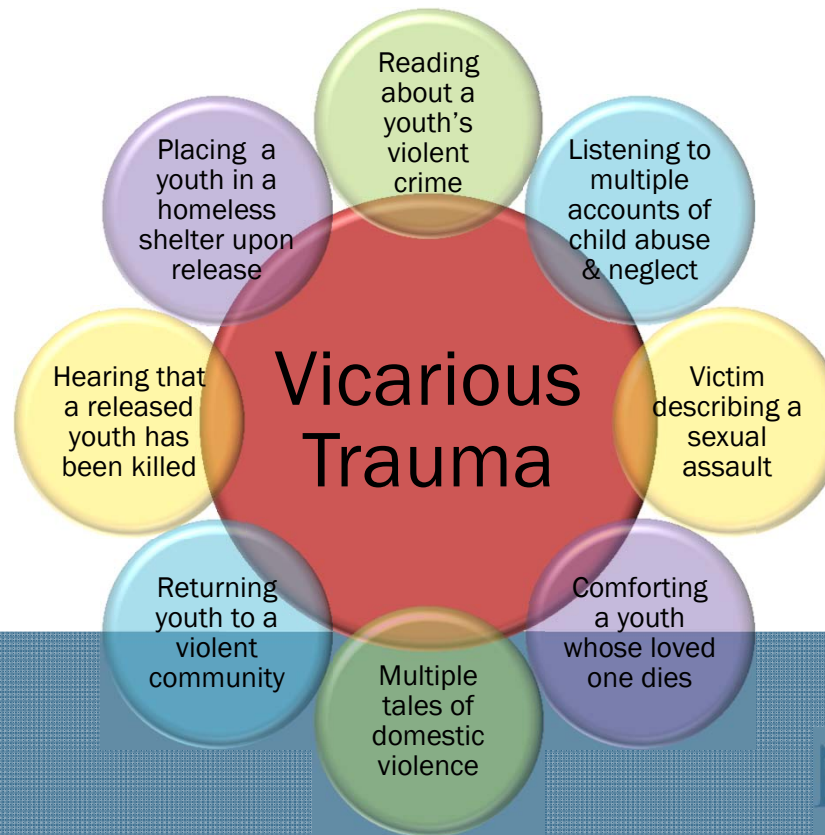
- Examination of environment, practice, policy and persons from “A to Z” through a lens of *safety, agency, and connectedness*.
- Look for:
 - Trauma triggers
 - General stress
 - Navigability
 - Interaction of stakeholders with each other and parties
 - Ability to apply trauma training in a meaningful way

WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE COURTS

- Confusion over purpose of being trauma-informed (lack of shared goals).
- Confusion over adverse childhood experiences, toxic stress, and trauma and how they are related but distinctly different in terms of impact on human development (lack of shared meaning).
- Training is highly variable and inconsistent.
- Challenges in applying knowledge about trauma.

WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE COURTS

- Vicarious trauma is a huge problem!



WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE COURTS

- Clear issues of burnout and turnover in many courts.
- Almost no inoculation training or training on how to recognize and respond to secondary traumatic stress.
- In general, limited appreciation regarding environmental stress.
- Most courts are extremely confusing to navigate and would benefit from improved signage.
- Challenges in applying knowledge about trauma.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT: PERSONS

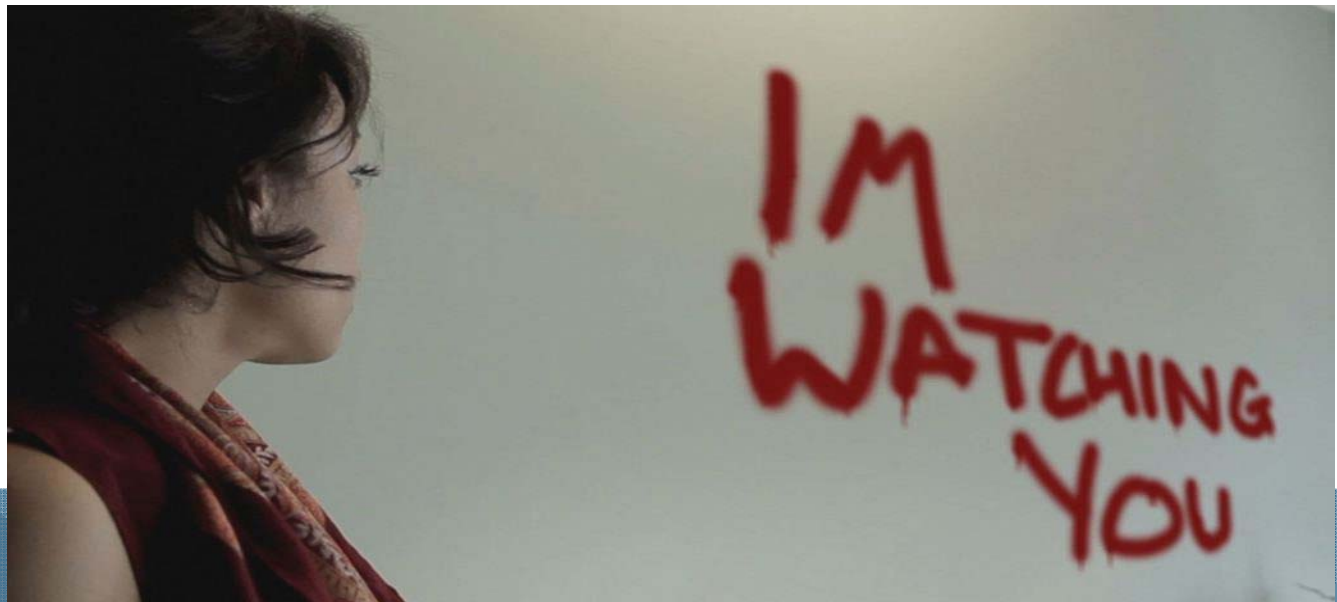
- Create a shared definition of trauma
- Prioritize secondary traumatic stress
- Solicit opinions of community members
- Promote diversity in court professionals

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT: ENVIRONMENT

- Promote SAFETY
- Create an environment conducive to limiting arousal
 - Low stress process

SAFETY

Victims need a place to sit where they will feel safe from their perpetrators



SAFETY

People need to feel safe coming into the court, within the courtrooms, and in waiting areas





PROCESS NOT STRESSFUL

Clients have somewhere to meet with their attorney separate from general waiting area.

Consumers do not have to wait for long periods of time for their hearings



ENVIRONMENT – LIMITING AROUSAL

- Environment should be comfortable
- Aesthetically appealing
- Appropriate lighting and temperature
- Minimize Noise
 - Bailiffs calling out names of parties in the waiting area
 - Loud speakers
 - Overcrowded waiting areas



ENVIRONMENT – LIMITING

What does waiting room art say to consumers?



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT: POLICY

- Implement a policy that eliminates presumptive shackling for juveniles appearing in court.

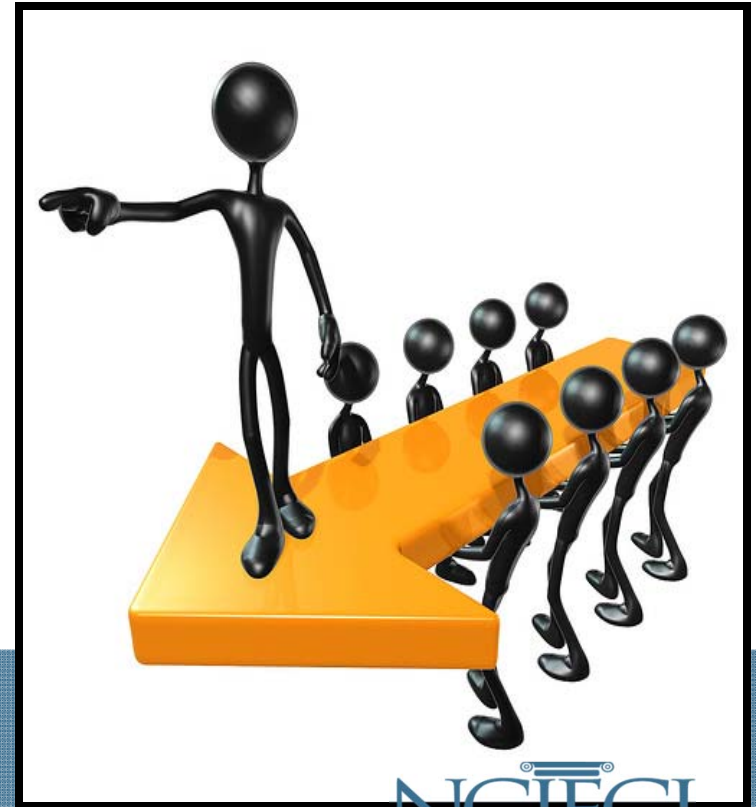


RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-INFORMED COURT: PRACTICE

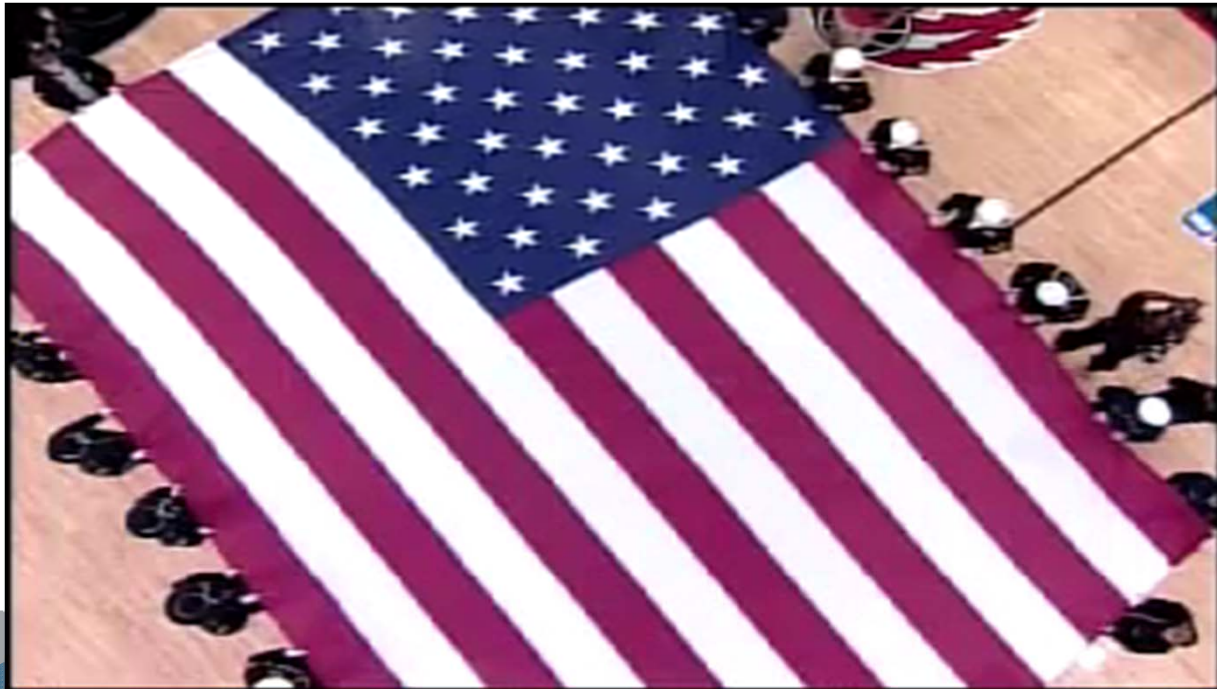
- Match services to unique needs of the family
- Discuss how to implement trauma screening into current practice.
- Promote healing environment through positive interactions with the court
- Promote position pro-social connections for youth and families.

TRAUMA-INFORMED COURTS: SOME IDEAS

- Judicial leadership and collaboration
- Ask questions (e.g., why do we do X, Y, Z?)
- Ensure staff are trained and on the same page
- Implement universal precautions
- Customer service
- Practice and model self care
- Engage persons of character



PROMOTE RESILIENCE THROUGH POSITIVE CONNECTIONS



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org

National Council of Juvenile and Family
Court Judges

www.ncjfcj.org



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