



# Trauma-Informed Practice

## Resources for Alberta Post-Secondary Settings

Developed by the Healthy Campus Alberta team, in consultation with HCA community members from Mount Royal University and University of Calgary  
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Those in helping roles related to post-secondary student mental health will inevitably find trauma implicated in their work. Trauma-informed practice is an approach that can provide knowledge and strategies to mitigate trauma in all aspects of post-secondary settings. This resource sheet provides an overview of resources related to trauma and trauma-informed practice, with a focus on the Albertan post-secondary context and student mental health.

### Definitions

**Trauma** is “both the experience of, and a response to, an overwhelmingly negative event or series of events” ([Public Health Agency of Canada](#)). The experience and effects of trauma are unique for each person.

Some types of trauma include:

- Acute trauma
- Developmental trauma
- Intergenerational trauma
- Racial trauma
- Vicarious trauma

**Trauma-informed practice** involves “*realizing* the widespread impacts of trauma and the many pathways to recovery, *recognizing* the common reactions to trauma... and *responding* by integrating knowledge of trauma and recovery into all levels of organizational structure” ([Alberta Health Services](#)).

In the health sector, a related approach is **trauma-informed care**. In educational contexts, the term **trauma-informed practice** is more commonly used. All trauma-informed approaches aim to build safety, trust, choice, and collaboration.



## Note

**Post-traumatic stress disorder** (PTSD) is a diagnosable disorder that is caused by a traumatic event. However, not all traumatic event experiences will result in PTSD.

This resource sheet encompasses trauma in general. A [\*\*resource from CMHA Alberta about PTSD\*\*](#) provides further information.

## Introductory Resources

These resources include definitions and approaches to trauma and trauma-informed practice in Canada and Alberta.

- [\*\*The Trauma Toolkit\*\*](#) from Klinik Community Health Centre
- [\*\*Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families\*\*](#) from the British Columbia Ministry of Children and Family Development
- Resources from Trauma Informed Care Collective
- [\*\*Trauma and violence-informed approaches to policy and practice\*\*](#) from Public Health Agency of Canada
- [\*\*Trauma Informed Care \(TIC\) eLearning series\*\*](#) from Alberta Health Services
- [\*\*K-12 Instructional Supports: Trauma-Informed Practice\*\*](#) from the Government of Alberta



Trauma-informed services recognize that the core of any service is **genuine, authentic and compassionate relationships**.

-Klinik Community Health Centre





## Trauma-Informed Practice in Post-Secondary Settings

Trauma-informed practice can support post-secondary students from equity-deserving groups, students who have experienced gender-based or sexual violence, or any student who has experienced trauma. Whether students, staff, or faculty, it is crucial for all members of the campus community to be equipped with the skills to recognize and respond to the impacts of trauma on the student experience. While many of these resources are from the USA, their lessons can be applicable to the Albertan context.

### Resources for Student Services Professionals

All student service professionals, whether their work is directly or indirectly related to student mental health, can engage in trauma-informed practice. These approaches can shape service provision to be sensitive to the effects of trauma and re-traumatization among students.

- **Trauma-Informed Practices for Postsecondary Education: A Guide** from Education Northwest
- **Safe Place: Trauma-Sensitive Practice for Health Centers Serving Higher Education Students** from National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
- **Trauma, healing and learning in the Canadian postsecondary institution** from Dan Cantiller, Toronto Metropolitan University
- **Special Issue: Trauma-Informed Practice in Student Affairs: Multidimensional Considerations for Care, Healing, and Wellbeing** from New Directions for Student Services
- **Trauma-Informed Approaches** from Association of College and University Housing Officers – International
- **Trauma-Informed Student Affairs Practice** from Student Affairs Now

### Resources for Instructors

These resources are a starting point to understand how the post-secondary classroom environment can benefit from a trauma-informed approach.

- Resources from **Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning**
- **Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning Practices Post-COVID** from Dr. Yuenying Carpenter, University of Calgary
- **Trauma-Informed Teaching and Learning** from Teaching In Higher Ed



## Vicarious Trauma

Vicarious trauma, also referred to as secondary traumatic stress, describes the effects on those in helping roles when they work with individuals who have experienced trauma (TEND). These resources provide some strategies to address vicarious trauma for those in helping roles, including staff, students, or faculty.

- **Defining Vicarious Trauma and Secondary Traumatic Stress** from TEND
- **Preventing, Recognizing & Addressing Vicarious Trauma** from EQUIP Health Care
- **Vicarious Trauma and Self-Care Toolkit** from Toronto Youth Equity Strategy
- **Tools to Reduce Secondary Trauma and Compassion Fatigue** from TEND

## Post-Traumatic Growth

Posttraumatic growth (PTG) is “the experience of positive change that occurs as a result of the struggle with highly challenging life crises” (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). The Healthy Campus Alberta community has explored PTG as a way to foster individual and collective resiliency.

- **Trauma Informed Leadership: Optimizing Patient Outcomes** with Dr. Charl Els
- **Post-Traumatic Growth: How Trauma Shapes our Priorities in Work & Life** with TEND



Just as we encourage those we support to find ways to take care of themselves, **as providers we need to take some of our own medicine.** It matters for our physical, emotional and mental well-being.

-Toronto Youth Equity Strategy



Is there a resource you'd like to see added? Do you have more questions?  
Get in touch with the HCA team!  
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