



Brief Guide: Starting a Task Force on Trauma Sensitivity

It takes a village to address childhood trauma in schools. Setting up a task force is a good start.

The Checklist for Starting a Task Force on Trauma Sensitivity

- Include a representative from each campus and each department, if possible.
- Documentation (charter, meeting schedule, agenda and minutes).
- Location
- Sample Meeting Agenda
- Task Force Charter
- Discuss bi-monthly or quarterly meeting schedule
- Establish set of norms to be read at introduction of each meeting. Could include: engage in active listening and participation, be mindful of time, monitor use of technology, be aware of impact on the room, have fun, what is learned here leaves here
- Discuss confidentiality
- Share contact information and set up a platform for group communication
- Create campus committees with primary contact person and back-up contact person
- Discuss vision and identify unique needs and challenges
- Self-care to prevent compassion fatigue



Help Forming Your Task Force

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Millions of people use the [Community Tool Box](#) each year to get help taking action, teaching, and training others in organizing for community development. With this toolbox, you can find help assessing community needs and resources, addressing social determinants of health, engaging stakeholders, action planning, building leadership, improving cultural competency, planning an evaluation, and sustaining your efforts.

- [Community Tool Box](#)
- [An Overview of Strategic Planning or “VMOSA” \(Vision, Mission, Objectives, Strategies, and Action Plans\)](#)
- [Developing Strategic and Action Plans](#)
- [Enhancing Cultural Competence](#)
- [Advocating for Change](#)

Sample Task Force Charter

The overall charge to the Task Force is to establish a vision for a trauma-sensitive [NAME OF YOUR SCHOOL DISTRICT] where all staff understand the lasting impact of trauma on a child and appropriate systems are in place to ensure students feel safe, welcomed, and supported.

The task force’s initial efforts will focus on identifying immediate and long-term actions to accomplish the vision.

The task force plan of action is to meet every [#] weeks at [INSERT Meeting Times and Locations] with campus and department representatives to solicit input, information, and perspectives on trauma-informed/trauma-sensitive actions, status and needs, and to receive suggestions for improvement and advancement of a trauma-sensitive culture across [SCHOOL DISTRICT].

With a trauma-sensitive focus, the following actions have been identified to be accomplished within 24 months:

1. Create a local resource guide of relevant services for traumatized kids and families
2. Established a chain-of-command to alert designated staff when concerned about a student
3. Create a tracking system for traumatized students in their school management software
4. Provide ongoing professional development for task force members
5. Educate and update school staff
6. Provide district-wide opportunities for 50% of staff to attend trauma-training conferences and course
7. Adopt alternative discipline policies

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8. Integrate social-emotional learning into curriculum
9. Improve access to mental and behavioral health services
10. Raise community awareness

Recognizing the complexity of these actions, the Task Force recognizes that district-wide change takes time and that specific roles and responsibilities will be identified for members. Roles, responsibilities and the timeline may need to be revisited. Members will provide agenda items three days prior to the meeting and the agenda will be distributed one day prior to the meeting. The charter, agenda, post meeting notes, and additional information will be distributed through a shared workspace.

Sample: Task Force Meeting Agenda

Event Name:

Time and Date:

Location:

- I. Welcome and Introductions (document attendance)
- II. Purpose of the Task Force
 - a. Define the problem (PPT)
 - b. Discuss solutions (PPT)
- III. Operating Logistics
 - a. Establish set of norms
 - b. Set next three meeting dates
 - c. What is mode of decision making? Voting? Consensus?
 - d. What information will be document after each meeting? How?
 - e. How will information be distributed?
 - f. Roles and responsibilities?
- IV. Discussion to establish a vision and actions
- V. Next Steps

Sample: Task Force Discussion Points for Action

- Create a local resource guide: A resource guide can help connect students and families, as well as employees, to support for basic needs, like food, shelter, transportation, and safety. A resource guide can also connect students, families and employees to mental, behavioral and physical health services.
- Create chain-of-command: All school staff should be aware of and feel empowered to alert designated staff if they are concerned about a child. If a bus driver, for example, sees that a child is in need, the driver should talk to the child and alert the designated campus representative. Rather than waiting for misbehavior or absenteeism, all school staff are responsible for the wellbeing of their students. If a

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student is upset or alone, there is no reason school staff shouldn't talk to them. School staff should feel confident in their campus' ability and capacity to support students. It's rarely the perfect response that makes it better. What makes it better is connection.

- Create tracking protocol: Students don't magically overcome trauma at the end of the school day or school year. As students change classrooms and campuses, a tracking system can inform and update new teachers and counselors to ensure they are prepared to meet the students' needs.
- District awareness: Relationships buffer the damaging impact of childhood trauma and toxic stress. All school employees play a role in building a trauma-sensitive school, thus all school employees should be educated on the impact of trauma and updated on the steps the district is taking to support these students.
- Professional development: A child with four or more adverse childhood experiences is 46 times more likely to have learning or emotional problems. Workforce development is key to alleviating the effects of childhood trauma and improving a child's success in education.
- Alternative discipline: Alternatives to suspension, for example, can diminish the negative outcomes of harmful discipline policies, boost academic achievement, reduce student misconduct, and build self-esteem and community, particularly among children facing trauma.
- Social-emotional learning in curriculum: A woman with seven or more adverse childhood experiences is 5.5 times more likely to become pregnant as a teenager. Social and emotional learning helps students manage emotional responses, manage conflict, make decisions, communicate successfully, and build and maintain relationships, all of which positively impact academics, behaviors, attitudes and skills.
- Community awareness: Schools and communities need to work together to address gaps in systems to prevent and respond to childhood adversity.



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