

Review Tool for School Policies, Protocols, Procedures & Documents: Examination Using a Trauma-Sensitive School Lens

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Value	Desired Characteristics of the Policy, Protocol, Procedure or Document	Consistency with the Desired Characteristic*					Cite evidence to support rating
		1 Very Inconsistent	2 Inconsistent	3 Neutral or Not Sure	4 Consistent	5 Very Consistent	
Safety	This policy, protocol, procedure or document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reinforces listening to students' histories without judgment. • Emphasizes value for emotional and physical safety for students, including adapting usual approaches, if needed. 						
Trustworthiness	This policy, protocol, procedure or document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes trust is something that is earned over time, so students may not tell the truth until a relationship is established. • Recognizes students may "test" relationships, because they may have been hurt by people close to them in the past who were supposed to guide or protect them. 						
Collaboration	This policy, protocol, procedure or document: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizes relationships matter and demonstrates interest in students' histories and current life circumstances. • Establishes an expectation staff will work together with students to create a plan to help them learn skills, rather than dictating to students a plan to change behavior. 						

* For each TIC Value, indicate to what extent you agree or disagree that the policy, protocol, procedure or document being reviewed is consistent and aligned with the desired response from students and families. The greater the consistency and alignment, the more trauma-sensitive the policy, protocol, procedure or document is.

Adapted by the Wisconsin Department of Instruction in collaboration with Sara Daniel, SaintA, and Pam Black, Trauma-Sensitive Education, LLC, for use by schools from a similar document created by Elizabeth Hudson for the Department of Health Services. The five TIC Values are from Fallot & Harris, Community Connections, www.ccdc1.org.

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Choice	<p>This policy, protocol, procedure or document ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognizes a “one-size-fits-all” approach can make students feel discounted. Recognizes students cannot learn to make better choices, unless given real choices to make. Demonstrates student choices are important and valued. Recognizes that in the past, some students may have been told 1) what they think does not matter and 2) to do things that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Helps students to believe they have meaningful choices that will be respected. 						
Empowerment	<p>This policy, protocol, procedure or document ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redefines student “problems” as coping strategies or adaptations. Recognizes student strengths and anticipates areas where students need to build skills. Recognizes students 1) may often feel like they cannot be successful and 2) require their strengths to receive more emphasis and attention. Recognizes students are often told what to do and how to do it, so they may have a hard time believing their choices and opinions matter to others. Helps students to feel more confident and hopeful about their future. 						

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Uninformed View vs. Trauma-Informed View

The descriptions below can be used to help determine to what extent a particular school policy, protocol, procedure or document is or is not trauma-informed. The contrasting views are designed to draw attention to language, both verbal and non-verbal, that does not support a trauma-sensitive school environment and may trigger students with trauma histories.

Uninformed View	Trauma-Informed View
Views negative behavior solely as student choice. Utilizes punitive consequences to motivate students (e.g., shame, blame, guilt, rejection, isolation or deprivation).	Views students as wanting to do well but possibly 1) lacking the necessary skills to get their needs met or 2) having developed misunderstood patterns of behavior in response to challenges. Considers students may have a negative world view that influences their interactions.
Characterizes student challenges in negative language (e.g., acting out, uncontrollable, manipulative, naughty, defiant). Communicates an expectation of failure.	Characterizes student challenges in constructive language (e.g., in need of emotional regulation, calming strategies or skills).
Refers to students using labels (e.g., “Tier 3” or “EBD”).	Eliminates the use of labels and uses richer language to describe students (e.g., Lance does well with his peers when he receives assistance on the playground).
Utilizes an authoritarian approach.	Uses a collaborative approach.
Punishes or minimizes the importance of the student’s coping strategies.	Recognizes that behavior is communication and searches for the function of the behavior. Strives to support the student meeting the function of the behavior in positive and productive ways.
Does not take the whole student into account (e.g., strict focus on academics only, reduced capacity for genuine warmth or concern, prioritizes task completion exclusively).	Recognizes student academics, behavior, social-emotional learning, health, and family and community wellness as connected and works to integrate support from a whole student perspective.
Does not teach expectations to the student and assumes the student should already know.	Teaches and re-teaches expectations in school. Understands that teaching is not simply telling. Differentiates instruction for both academic and behavioral expectations.
Creates systems by which the student must demonstrate he/she is worthy of intervention or must qualify for services (e.g., special education).	Promotes systems that are integrated (not “siloed”) and a culture where all students get what they need to be successful, regardless of whether they qualify for services or not.
Prioritizes the needs of the school or staff over the needs of the student.	Fosters a student-centered environment.
Uses professional “insider” language or jargon.	Uses language that can be understood by students and families considering comprehension level, language skills, culture, and native language.

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