

2. STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING GUIDE

Adopting a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide requires significant and ongoing investment in professional development to ensure that the entire staff has the knowledge and skills to support students who are affected by trauma. This handout is designed to help school-based administrators and trauma-sensitive work groups create the plan needed for such an investment. A comprehensive professional development plan will cover multiple training topics and will provide the following information for each topic:

- **Topic title** and brief **description**
- **Audience**
- **Training delivery method** and **rationale** for use
- Intended **learning outcomes** that indicate participant mastery and/or application of new professional knowledge and skills
- At least one measurable **benchmark** or indicator for each outcome
- **Evaluation strategy** to assess intended outcomes and indicators, including data-collection instruments, data-analysis techniques, and reporting method
- **Follow-up** as needed to support learning
- **Resources to support** professional development activities

Use the form titled Staff Development Plan at the end of this handout to develop your plan. For each topic you address, make a copy of the blank form and then enter the information as you develop the activity.

1. Topic title and description

Providing all members of the school staff with a basic education in trauma and its impact is an important first step in the process of becoming a trauma-sensitive school. The *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource and the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* training module support initial training efforts for all staff. Ongoing professional development builds on these initial training tools and provides additional information on trauma-related topics and helps staff develop skills associated with trauma sensitivity.

In some cases, professional development activities associated with trauma sensitivity align with activities supporting another approach, such as restorative practices or positive behavioral supports. Describing the topics will help you anticipate such alignments.

Trauma-Related Topics for All Staff

- Child development and attachment and the effects of early adversity
- The neurobiology of trauma
- Particular types of trauma (e.g., historical trauma, racial trauma, complex trauma)
- Experiences of particular groups of students (e.g., LGBTQ youth, youth of color, refugees)
- Relationship between culture and trauma (e.g., culture-specific experiences and responses)
- Secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma
- Child and adolescent mental health
- Resilience across development
- Core principles of trauma sensitivity

Skill Building for All Staff

- General trauma-sensitive practices
- Trauma-informed crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies
- Culturally responsive practices
- Strategies for engaging youth and families
- Strengths-based approaches to working with youth
- Self-care strategies
- Restorative practices
- Positive behavioral supports
- Mental health first aid

Specialized Topics

- Classroom strategies for promoting safety (teachers)
- Social and emotional competencies and curricula (teachers)
- Trauma-sensitive assessment and evaluation practices (student services staff)
- Evidence-based, trauma-specific mental health interventions for addressing trauma (student services staff)

2. Audience

Most topics will be useful for all staff, although some specialized topics specifically address the information needs of particular staff participants. Specifying the audience for each topic provides information for determining delivery method selection, choice of venue, and mechanism for announcing the activity. Even more important, knowing the audience helps the organizer or trainer focus and prepare each activity to meet any particular audience needs.

3. Training delivery method and rationale

Adults learn most effectively when they are actively engaged in the learning process, causing growth to occur at the individual level and helping change occur in the broader school environment. Real change calls for ongoing and varied training, incorporating opportunities for staff to practice applying concepts and to give feedback. Potential training delivery methods include any of the following, each of which provides advantages and limitations that will contribute to your rationale for using it:

Large-group training can be useful when providing initial staff and leader education about trauma and trauma sensitivity. Schoolwide trainings allow for all staff to receive the same information at the same time, to ensure a common understanding across roles and departments. Training may be done in person or by having all staff review the same web-based materials and offering times for follow-up discussion. Although helpful when starting out, one-time, large-group trainings are only a place to begin and should not be used exclusively. Staff retention of information is limited if concepts are not reinforced continuously.

Small-group training allows for in-depth conversation and offers opportunities to apply knowledge to practice. Small-group sessions may be conducted for all staff in a particular role (e.g., teachers, student service staff, paraprofessionals) so that examples and discussions can be tailored. Small groups also may be multidisciplinary, to encourage cross-agency communication and opportunities to learn what staff face in different roles, as well as flexibility in applying trauma-related concepts. As with large-group trainings, training content must be reinforced day to day to have long-term impact.

Team or staff meetings already in place offer smaller settings in which to convey, clarify, and apply information on a regular basis. Small-group meetings are a forum for open communication, peer support, and additional training and education. These meetings may include regular staff meetings, in which particular trauma-related topics can be addressed or reinforced each time, and department or shift meetings, in which learning can be tailored to the specific needs of these staff.

Real-world application provides opportunities to practice applying trauma-related concepts in everyday situations. To further large- or small-group trainings, school leaders may identify skills or strategies of focus for a particular time period, such as a *skill of the month* for all staff to practice—for example, using strengths-based language, identifying potential trauma triggers, and incorporating self-regulation strategies in the classroom. All staff members are charged with practicing a particular skill or considering a particular concept in their work. Staff or team meetings may be used for staff to report out on their experiences.

4. Learning outcomes and benchmarks

Staff development plans for supporting trauma sensitivity should include anticipated outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The components need to indicate who demonstrates each outcome and benchmark. Each benchmark also needs to be measurable and time limited. Data for deriving this information may come from the evaluation strategies you choose and may help determine your follow-up activities.

Sample Learning Outcomes	Benchmarks
Training participants will demonstrate an understanding of the neurobiological effects of trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Pre- and post-training surveys administered at the time of the session assess for knowledge change related to brain and body responses to stress and trauma. ■ Upon receiving the information, participants will be able to identify potential trauma-related responses by their students.
Training participants will be able to apply trauma-related concepts to their classroom practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ During the session, teachers will identify specific strategies that they can use to reduce trauma-related triggers in the classroom environment.
Training participants will be able to identify the warning signs of secondary traumatic stress or vicarious trauma.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Within a week of the session, school staff will develop individualized self-care plans that incorporate helpful strategies for supporting health and wellness.

5. Evaluation strategy

Evaluating professional development activities involves collecting data about the activity that took place and about the participation. Information gathered may include staff perceptions about the activity and benchmark measurements that indicate whether the activity achieved the desired outcomes. Data gathered from professional development activities can be used as part of a school's larger efforts to evaluate the impact of trauma sensitivity on students, staff, and schools.

Evaluation Question	Data Collection
Did the professional development take place as planned?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Track individual staff participation via sign-in sheets. ■ Track whether the activity or activities occurred at the intended frequency or duration as planned using tools such as activity logs for tracking any follow-up. ■ Note any factors that altered original plans related to the professional development.
What were teachers' perceptions of the professional development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Survey training participants on topics such as their understanding of the purpose of the professional development, the usefulness of the activity, and the support they received to engage in and apply learning.
Did the professional development achieve the intended outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Data collection is tailored to benchmarks indicating whether the professional development activity achieved your desired outcomes. For example, pre- and post-training surveys can assess knowledge change related to trauma and trauma sensitivity.

6. Follow-up

Depending on the topic, mastery may benefit from staff feedback, trainer assessment, or repetition or refresher activities. The needs of your staff will dictate the type of follow-up to offer. The following ideas are provided to stimulate your own ideas:

- Provide opportunities for teachers to try out a new approach in the classroom and report back on results during team meetings.
- Trainers can respectfully and unobtrusively observe or coach the staff on the job.
- Designate a particular time period for staff to practice the same skill. For example, in a general meeting announce a strategy of the month related to trauma sensitivity, such as developing routines related to transition times.

7. Resources to support

Effective staff development requires adequate resources, including time, staffing, facilities and equipment, and funding. School administrators and trauma-sensitive work groups identify needed resources for each trauma-related professional development activity. With limited funding and time for professional development, as well as competing demands related to staff training, consider how trauma-related topics align with other topics that may be of interest in your school, such as restorative practices, school climate improvement, and positive behavioral supports. Combining professional development efforts maximizes resources and helps staff understand the integration between various approaches.

Staff Development Plan

Copy this form, and complete it for each topic.

Topic title:	Date:
Description:	Lead: Team:
Audience:	Training delivery method: Rationale for use:
Learning outcomes:	Benchmarks:
Evaluation strategy:	Follow-up:
Resources for support:	

Action Steps	Person Responsible	Date for Completion

References

- Maryland State Department of Education. (2008). *Maryland teacher professional development planning guide*. Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from <http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/share/pdf/MarylandTeacherProfessionalDevelopmentPlanningGuide.pdf>
- Haslam, M. B. (2008). *Maryland teacher professional development evaluation guide*. Retrieved from <http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/share/pdf/MarylandTeacherProfessionalDevelopmentEvaluationGuide.pdf>