

CHANGING MINDS:

Preventing and Healing Childhood Trauma: State Policy Guide



Background

Early exposure to childhood trauma and violence in the home, school or community can affect children throughout their entire lives. And, it is far too common an experience for our children.

Traumatic events can harm the development of a child's brain and body. Over time, repeated childhood exposure to violence is significantly correlated with adverse health, educational, and social outcomes later in life such as mental illness, poverty, and involvement in the justice system.

States are well-positioned to enact policies to prevent and reduce the life-long poor outcomes that research indicates can flow from children's exposure to violence by creating opportunities that help prevent and heal child trauma so children are safe, healthy and successful. It is a challenging undertaking to identify the effective policies, programs, and practices that are working and to advance them. In June 2017, **Futures Without Violence** embarked on a process to develop guidance for states.

Call to Action

There is strong consensus about how states can best move forward. Pioneering states across the country as varied as Virginia, Wisconsin, Texas, Massachusetts, Montana, and California are acting to help prevent children from being exposed to traumatic experiences, as well as strengthen resilience and healing through leadership and policy change. **Futures Without Violence** believes this is a crucial moment to support states that are leading the way as well as spur interest in additional states. This Policy Guide offers a holistic approach that reflects what we know today. We are early in this journey and at an important juncture to share lessons learned as we travel the road together.



To create meaningful opportunities, it requires:

- ✓ Key levers across all sectors
- ✓ Attention to prevention AND response
- ✓ Financing be addressed
- ✓ Solutions that don't require a lot of resources
- ✓ Equity/disparities as a bedrock value which states will approach differently
- ✓ States will start at different places and build on their own assets
- ✓ Near-term options and create early wins

1) State-level Collaboration and Accountability

- A State Council to Prevent and Heal Child Trauma (an accountable collaborative) is a critical leadership structure to create and guide collaborative strategies across sectors and monitor gaps and progress to promote a shared vision
- Ensure participation of survivors, community, parents, faith leaders
- Promote flexible financing, and braid and blend existing funding
- Advance evidence-based, and culturally relevant community programming
- Support social norm strategies
- Advocate for better, more consistent data collection and prioritize needs
- Forge partnerships with philanthropy



- Support technical assistance and best practices in domestic violence and child welfare
- Convene community-based collaborations to build local capacity
- Advocate and improve services for healthy parenting, student well-being, positive school climate, universal home visitation and language access
- Ensure every health plan and primary care medical home understands trauma-informed practice, offers universal education and early identification, and provides care-coordination

5) Race and Gender Equity

- Convene communities to assess policy opportunities to advance equity and address disproportionality
- Review systems policies that contribute to inequities
- Use funding and procurement levers to promote equity
- Assess capacity and report service outcomes with attention to race and gender equity
- Require that trauma training include education and skills on cultural competency, bias, equity and reducing disparities
- Diversify the workforce to reflect communities served
- Support and promote culturally relevant services that incorporate resiliency



2) Innovate and Learn



- Launch innovations in multiple sectors
- Offer state guidance on best practices
- Develop benchmarks and monitor progress through data collection and reporting
- Foster broad communication to inspire accountability

3) Workforce Training and Wellness

- Require sector-specific training for existing workforce
- Include state agencies, direct service agencies, early childhood and K-12, health care and behavioral health, public health and home visitors, domestic violence, child welfare, law enforcement and courts
- Require child trauma curriculum in the educational preparation for child-serving professionals
- Support model workplace policy for self-care and healthy work environments



Policy Collaborators

Forty state and local leaders, federal partners, philanthropy, and national stakeholders met in Washington, DC to exchange policy approaches and craft a framework for preventing and healing childhood trauma promoted at state levels. Participants hailed from governors' offices, advocacy organizations, research institutions, state and federal agencies as well as from health, child welfare, education, justice, violence prevention and child development organizations. Participants were from:

California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, and Wisconsin.

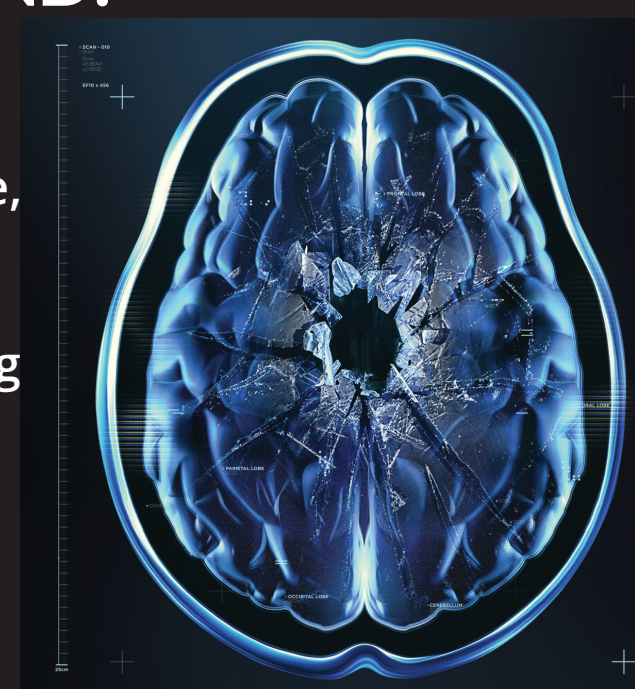
4) Prevention and Services: Statewide Systems



- Increase family and two-generation based, trauma informed support and services through behavioral health, health care, child welfare, education and other systems
- Engage the voices of youth and adults who experienced violence
- Improve services by promoting successful low-cost strategies
- Enforce parity requirements for mental health and substance use
- Increase early identification

WITNESSING VIOLENCE CAN CHANGE A KID'S MIND. YOU CAN HELP THEM HEAL.

New research shows that witnessing traumatic events, like domestic violence, shootings, or even fighting, can impact the physical development of a child's brain — potentially leading to lifelong health and social issues. Supportive, caring adults can prevent or help reverse the impact by practicing everyday, healing gestures like comforting, listening, inspiring, collaborating and celebrating. Discover more about the Changing Minds everyday gestures, science of childhood trauma, and the power of a caring, consistent adult at: www.ChangingMindsNOW.org



<https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/changing-minds-preventing-healing-childhood-trauma-state-policy-guide/>

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