



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VI, No. 6

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ **Individualize care and learning activities**
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Individualized Care and Learning Activities

Caring for Children Who Have Experienced Trauma

Children who display challenging behavior is sometimes an indication that they may be struggling to cope with stress or perhaps even toxic stress (strong, frequent, prolonged adversity) brought on by traumatic experiences. Trauma can result from any event that is physically or emotionally harmful. These events may include

- natural disasters
- physical or sexual assault
- loss of a parent
- a serious accident or illness
- witnessing domestic or community violence (Tokarz 2017)

Brain research has shown that when children who have experienced trauma are exposed to a reminder of the threat, such as a loud noise, the brain responds by triggering a stress response (fight, flight or freeze). The challenging behaviors brought on by this stress response could include screaming or crying, throwing things, hitting, or trying to escape, amongst other reactions (Statman-Weil 2015).

It's important to keep in mind that the root cause of challenging behavior is emotional dysregulation (inability to control strong emotions). Understanding this rather than seeing the child's behavior as something to correct and punish will go further in helping her recovery. You play an important role in helping this child heal and feel safe by the way you respond to her and through your positive interactions. You can make a difference by:

- Developing a relationship with the child and family at the beginning of their entry into your program.
- Requesting support from community partners.
- Ensuring that you are taking care of yourself by reducing your own stress and having a support system.

In this newsletter, we will discuss how **trauma informed care** can support children who may have experienced trauma.



Trauma Informed Care

Children suffering from traumatic experiences are often misunderstood and in need of supportive caregivers who provide safe, trauma-sensitive spaces. The supportive caregiver must build a positive relationship through consistent responsive interactions. It is through these positive relationships with caring adults that true healing can begin. **Trauma informed care** includes a multilayered approach of:

- Providing a safe environment
- Providing regulation strategies
- Using “in the moment” strategies

Infants

Babies can feel, hear, and even react to the sounds of raised voices even before birth. According to The Florida State University Center for Prevention & Early Intervention Policy (2010), the growing fetus’ brain is affected by the trauma, resulting in changes in the genes of the fetus that may shape the child’s development. However, infants can also be calmed by the sound of their mother’s voice. Trauma informed care strategies for infants include:

- **Providing a safe environment** – A safe place for infants begins with you! Responding to an infant’s basic needs and cues will help her to begin to trust you.
- **Regulation strategies** – Help soothe the infant with rhythmic sounds, touch, and movement. For example, try the 5 S’s: **s**waddle baby and gently **s**way back and forth, up and down while whispering “shhh, shhh,” in a rhythmic voice; hold baby on her **s**ide, tummy down on your arm; help her to soothe herself by offering something to **s**uck such as a pacifier or even a clean finger.
- **“In the moment” strategies** – All infants have different needs. Notice what upsets the infant and respond with care. For example, does the sound of the rubbish truck upset her? Try soothing techniques such as holding her close to you and humming a familiar tune.

Toddlers

Toddlers who have experienced trauma may have difficulty connecting to adults and peers while regulating their emotions. Work closely with parents and other professionals to support the child for the best possible outcome. Multilayered trauma informed care strategies for toddlers include:

- **Providing a safe environment** – Create a sense of belonging by singing welcome songs that include the child’s name. (e.g., ___ is here today, ___ is here today. We are so happy that ___ is here today.) Greet each child in a special way that is unique to her needs (e.g., hug, high five, or a special handshake).
- **Regulation strategies** – Provide a rhythmic environment to activate the brainstem which targets and organizes the child’s brain chemistry. For example, play a CD, dance, sing, or use a drum or rhythm sticks to tap to a repetitive beat. Have toddlers practice modulation (e.g., sing in a soft voice/loud voice; make your feet go fast/slow).
- **“In the moment” strategies** – Allow toddlers acceptable ways to process their emotions. For example say, “I can see you are angry, but you may not hit your friends. Let’s stomp on bubble wrap or crumple and throw paper balls into a basket.”



Preschoolers

It is important to remember that children who have survived trauma often experience developmental delays. Early trauma can affect a preschooler's language, social and emotional regulation, ability to participate in imaginative play, and ability to focus when needed. Multilayered trauma informed care strategies for preschoolers include:

- **Providing a safe environment** – Provide a predictable schedule and a play based, developmentally appropriate environment. For example, provide a picture schedule of your day for children to see what is coming up next. *Remember that these children may be functioning at a toddler level. Try to provide time and space to let them explore at their level.
- **Regulation strategies** – Provide opportunities to practice impulse control in fun and nonthreatening ways such as *Simon Says*. Similarly, you can also try *The Challenge game*. Give each child an instrument or party horn and say, “We are going to have a challenge game! See if you can blow the horn but only when you hear the magic word __ (e.g., *unicorn*).” If a child makes a mistake, say, “Oops! That’s okay, let’s try again.”
- **“In the moment” strategies** – Children who feel threatened need time and space for the physiological effects to be buffered and brought back down to baseline. Support the child by providing a caring response and guiding the child to a cozy area filled with soft pillows, blankets, stuffed animals, soft music, and a few books. You can even create a cozy area by using a large box and cutting a hole to create a safe space. Encourage the child to use this space when she is feeling overwhelmed and needs help to calm down. Most importantly, remember that your relationship with this child plays an important role in assuring her resiliency. You can be that one person who makes a difference in the lives of vulnerable children by maintaining a loving relationship that supports and encourages them.



Additional Resources

Piplo Productions



Piplo Productions produces books, videos, and other resources to support children and families recovering from stressful or traumatic events. Visit their website for video links and free book downloads at <http://piploproductions.com/>

Shelter from the Storm: A Parent Guide



This guide includes tips and guidance for parents of children experiencing trauma. This resource helps parents understand new or challenging behaviors and how to deal with them.

<https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/1663-shelter-from-the-storm-a-parent-guide>



Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.

Citations:

Early Childhood Investigations Webinars. (2018). *Trauma-Informed Care in ECE: Key Strategies for Healing and Behavioral Change* by Dr. Barbara Sorrels [Video webinar]. Retrieved from <http://www.earlychildhoodwebinars.com/webinars/trauma-informed-care-in-ece-key-strategies-for-healing-and-behavioral-change/>

Statman-Weil, K. (2015). *Creating Trauma-Sensitive Classrooms*. Young Children.

Tokarz, B. (2017). *A Place Where All Children Can Thrive: Strategies for the Trauma-informed Classroom*. Child Care Exchange.



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Learning to Grow Quality Child Care for Registered Home-Based Providers is a project of University of Hawai'i, Windward Community College with funding from the Hawai'i Department of Human Services ★ 808-462-4700 ★ www.learningtogrowhawaii.org