

Women, Substance Use, and Trauma

A SYSTEM LEVEL PERSPECTIVE

Many women who have substance use problems have experienced trauma.

WHY DOES TRAUMA MATTER?

Research shows that trauma has an enormous effect on a person's physical and mental health. The effects of trauma can be a heavy burden not only on a woman and her family, but also on health and human services.

Service providers often misunderstand the behaviours and health issues associated with trauma. This can result in risks that women will be retraumatized and/or have negative experiences in service settings. Just as importantly, services are less effective when trauma-informed practices are not used to plan and deliver services.

WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN?

Recognizing and responding to the impacts of trauma increases the effectiveness of services, creates better outcomes, and improves satisfaction with services – at no greater cost.

Policy, planning, and funding:

Communicate the expectation that funded services must provide evidence-based trauma-informed practices. Support trauma-informed approaches in policy and system development.

Education:

Include training about the impacts of trauma, and trauma-informed approaches, in curricula, to ensure that academic institutions build the skills needed by the workforce.

Research:

Develop a Canadian-based research agenda that examines the complex impacts of trauma and the benefits of trauma-informed practices, particularly among diverse populations.

LEARN MORE ABOUT TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES

Two documents are available online at www.jeantweed.com

- **Highlights of Trauma-Informed Practices in Women's Substance Use Services**
- **Trauma Matters – Guidelines for Trauma-Informed Practices in Women's Substance Use Services**

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