



## Trauma Informed Care

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) offers a broad continuum of services to children and youth who have experienced trauma. YAP helps build youth resilience and promotes healing, mitigating potential negative impacts, by connecting youth with supportive adults, providing evidence-based treatments, and ensuring that all staff are trained in trauma informed care.

YAP's model is uniquely effective and adaptable in meeting trauma-related needs. Our model is comprehensive and holistic, utilizing best practices and core principles found in the wraparound, mentoring, restorative justice and positive youth development fields. YAP's model and guiding principles reflect the principles of trauma-informed care, emphasizing the development of a trust-based relationship with each youth and family while focusing on safety and their right to self-determination.

### What is Trauma Informed Care?

Trauma informed care is a broad approach to engaging people with histories of trauma that recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives. This approach moves from asking participants **"What's wrong with you?"** to a more sensitive **"What happened to you?"** and assists participants in addressing their trauma while feeling safe and empowered.

### Why Focus on Trauma?

Over 4 million children and youth in the United States are estimated to have experienced at least one traumatic event. Trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being. Complex Trauma describes both exposure to chronic trauma and the impact of such exposure on the child. Children who experienced complex trauma have endured multiple interpersonal traumatic events from a very young age.

While research suggests that up to 43% of children in the United States have experienced at least one type of traumatic event, these rates are much higher for children involved in child welfare, juvenile justice and mental health systems. Unidentified and untreated trauma can have lasting negative impact on neurological, emotional, psychological and social development that carries through into adulthood: adverse childhood experiences (ACE) are associated with higher incidences of mental illness, suicidality and substance abuse. Further, these children are vulnerable to re-traumatization by systems that are uninformed and unprepared to help.

### Trauma Informed Care Principles

Safety

Trustworthiness

Choice

Collaboration

Empowerment



Yet amid the tragedy, there is hope. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA) reported in 2012 on significant emotional and behavioral improvements for youth who benefit from trauma informed care approaches to treatment.

### YAP's Trauma-Informed Program Components

- **Individualized Service Planning** that addresses all life domains, such as **SAFETY**, physical/mental health, education/employment, housing, family, recreation, legal, etc. An important feature of our service planning includes screening for trauma exposure at the time of referral and assessment. YAP incorporates non-judgmental, youth friendly assessment tools that help solicit the information that is necessary to understand the type and scope of the trauma and then build a plan to address it.
- **Partnership** with each child, youth and family that gives the youth a sense of control through **EMPOWERING** them to express their needs and preferences in a **SAFE** environment, encourages them to help **CHOOSE** who to invite on their family team, what activities we do and where we go in the community.
- **Cross-system COLLABORATION** and engagement of other positive people, places and activities in their community that work to promote healing and resilience;
- **Neighborhood-based recruitment of positive role models** from the same communities as the young people they serve, facilitating **TRUST** and connection. Staff are trained in identifying signs and symptoms of trauma and supporting youth through the principles of trauma-informed care;
- **Evidence-Based Interventions:** YAP uses a number of evidence-based interventions that promote physical, psychological and emotional **SAFETY** and healing and are sensitive to the individuals' developmental age and needs, such as Trauma Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (TF CBT). We also offer evidence-based curricula such as Teen Outreach Program (TOP), Peaceful Alternative to Tough Situations (PATTs) and Girls Circle/Boys Council that help foster neurological growth in emotional regulation.

---

*“We must protect children, and we must not look away when they are in pain. We also must not let our own fears and pain stop us from helping. Above all, we must give them hope that their future will be better and safer.”*

*– Report of the Attorney General’s National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence*

---

### Promoting Sensitivity and Support Through Training

YAP’s “Child and Adolescent Trauma” training for direct service staff defines the various types of trauma, helps staff screen for and identify trauma, and provides concrete activities and interventions to prevent re-traumatization and effectively support youth in healing and recovery from trauma. Frontline staff and their supervisors also receive training on “Vicarious Trauma” to help promote staff self-awareness and self-care. Clinical staff also have access to training in “Trauma Focused Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy.”

## About YAP

Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) is a nationally recognized nonprofit organization founded in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania in 1975. YAP serves over 13,000 families a year in more than 100 programs across 21 states and the District of Columbia in rural, suburban and urban areas. Since our founding, 100% of our programming occurs in the home communities of the people we serve. Follow us on Twitter @YAPInc

## For more information

**Carla Benway, MSW**  
 Vice-President  
 cbenway@yapinc.org  
 717-514-6965  
 yapinc.org

