

Our experiences during our early years actually affect how we think feel and behave adverse and traumatic childhood experiences can derail development which is why it is important for schools to be trauma-informed. Adverse childhood experiences or ACEs are sadly pretty common in our society. ACEs take various different forms including abuse neglect domestic violence and difficulties stemming from mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse in the family. ACEs are more prevalent in children from disadvantaged and under-resourced communities and discrimination can add to the stress and hardship for some not all forms of adversity are traumatic but many do cause harm in the most severe and long-lasting cases of adversity a child's psychosocial functioning can be inhibited among other things this can impact their ability to form and maintain relationships throughout their lives. Schools can provide the perfect setting to promote resilience and lessen the effects of adversity but for some children, experiences in school pose a whole other set of emotional challenges. Traumatized children can have difficulty regulating emotions staying on task and relating with others which can prompt bullying from peers and harsh discipline from teachers. This treatment can add even more stress for children and can lead them to question their safety and develop mistrust in authority figures. This can be particularly impactful if those authority figures lack awareness in how trauma affects cognition and behavior or if they are being limited by their own implicit biases emotional challenges or exhaustion. Efforts are underway to change how schools serve vulnerable and traumatized children. To do this it's important to identify which programs are responsive to diverse student populations and which are most effective and sustainable. Our research shows that school-based trauma-responsive programs use a number of whole-child and systems-oriented approaches these approaches provide safe nurturing and supportive learning environments and therapeutic interventions when they are needed. They may also work to increase knowledge of trauma in school professionals parents and community providers to become trauma-informed schools must ensure that all students feel safe respected valued and meaningfully engaged. Teachers and other school professionals must be able to identify symptoms of trauma and know their own biases and triggers to minimize the risk of traumatization. Social-emotional skills must be incorporated into classrooms. To promote resilience and effective communication school professionals must establish and reinforce clear expectations for behavior. These core components can also be applied to other settings such as child welfare and juvenile justice to develop a broad and bold transformation of our child-serving systems.