Guidelines for Using The Trauma-Informed Practices Scale for Staff (TIPSS)
About the Trauma-Informed Practice Survey for Staff

This Practice Survey has two main purposes:

- To help domestic and sexual violence programs to better understand how staff and supervisors are incorporating accessible, culturally responsive, and trauma-informed (ACRTI) practices within their day-to-day activities; and

- To better understand ways staff members receive ACRTI supports in working at your program.

It has sections on ACRTI knowledge, staff and supervisory practices, and needs and how they translate to services for survivors, youth, and children.
This survey can be used to:

a. Document how staff trainings have impacted staff members' ratings of their knowledge

b. Better understand both supervisors' strengths and current challenges

c. Understand your staff's strengths and challenges in providing ACRTI domestic and sexual violence services

d. Document successes for funders, grant opportunities, and the public

e. Gain an overview on how staff members are approaching their work with survivors, youth, and children

The Trauma-Informed Practice Survey for Staff is meant for domestic and sexual violence staff members who provide direct services to survivors, youth, and children, as well as staff members who provide supervision.

It contains one section on ACRTI knowledge; three sections on practices when working with adults, youth, and children; one section on work with adults; one section on work with parents and caregivers; one section on work with children and youth; one section on ways that the program supports staff members in ACRTI ways; and two sections on providing supervision. It also has one question about the respondent's role within the organization, how long the respondent has worked for your program, and whether the respondent was introduced to trauma-informed practices before working at your organization.

This practice measure takes about 20 minutes to complete. At this time, it is only available in English. It is also only being offered as a PDF for paper-and-pencil administration. However, your program could adapt this to an online survey format through SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, or Qualtrics among other platforms.

For more information on creating and sustaining ACRTI organizations, please see NCDVTMH's Tools for Transformation: Becoming Accessible, Culturally Responsive, and Trauma-Informed Organizations
Questions to answer before using this survey

In order to get the most out of using the Trauma-Informed Practices Scale for Staff in your program, it is helpful to think through the following questions as a team before administering the survey.

**Goals:**

- **a.** What does your program hope to gain in administering this survey?
- **b.** How does this survey align with your program's goals and mission?
- **c.** Has your program implemented ACRTI services?
- **d.** Has your program invested in creating an ACRTI organizational environment for participants and staff?

**Administering the survey:**

- **a.** How does this survey fit in with other evaluation or feedback processes already in place?
- **b.** Who will be the point-person on your staff for this survey?
- **c.** Who will be responsible for entering and analyzing data?
- **d.** How will you make sure that this survey is anonymous and confidential so that staff members will feel as free as possible to be open and honest?
- **e.** How long will you administer this survey? Will you do it once or at multiple points in time so you can measure change?
- **f.** Will the survey be open to all staff members who work with participants, or just staff members from certain service programs?
How will you use the information you get from it?

a. What will you do with the results? How will you use them to further improve your organizational environment and services?

b. How prepared is your program to make changes based on the results?

c. Who will be involved in interpreting the results? Whose perspectives will you invite to the table in reviewing and making sense of the results?

d. How will you share the results from this survey?

We strongly recommend inviting staff members at all levels and from all service areas to participate in this survey—as long as they work directly with participants. This includes frontline advocates, program managers, residential and non-residential service staff, staff members working each shift, and staff members who work at each location (if your program has multiple offices).

The more representative the sample is, the more likely the results will be useful for your program.
Guidance by section

Background of Respondents

The first three questions allow you to gather some background information on the staff members completing this survey. These questions can help you to make sense of the results of the survey. It can help your program better understand the workplace experiences of different types of staff. For example, you can see if there are any differences in how supported by your program your residential versus non-residential staff feel. You can also see if there are any trends in responses based on how long staff members have worked for your program, or among staff members who have been familiar with trauma-informed approaches for a long time. You should tailor this section so that it fits your program.

Within this section, it is crucial to think through the balance between maintaining anonymity and gathering information on role and length of time at your program. For example, if your program has only one legal advocate, then having a checkbox for “legal advocate” would make it obvious who completed that survey. However, if your legal advocate is a part of a larger community response team, consider using “community response team member” as the position category. The same goes for the question asking participants how long they have worked for your program. If your program is small or, for example, has one brand-new hire, then this item may not work. Instead, you could either omit this item or change it so that there are categories that staff members can select (for example: 0-2 years, 3-5 years, 6-10 years, 10 or more years).

There may be additional factors that your program wishes to include in this section, with race, ethnicity, and gender identity being important for understanding the survey results. Again, this should be considered with care, as adding items on race, ethnicity, or gender identity in conjunction with role and tenure can very easily identify individual respondents, making it far less safe to provide open and honest responses. This is particularly concerning for smaller programs and programs that do not have a very diverse staff.
ACRTI Knowledge

4. Please rate your knowledge of the following topics or processes using the following options. Remember, you are not expected to know a lot about everything described here!

For this section, each knowledge response option is attached to a weighted number: expert = 4, very knowledgeable = 3, somewhat knowledgeable = 2, limited knowledge = 1, and none/virtually none = 0.

It is important to keep in mind that self-ratings of knowledge are complicated. Research has shown that people who have less knowledge on a given topic may overestimate their knowledge level, and those with more knowledge may underestimate it. The anchors describing each knowledge level were carefully worded to try to avoid these issues.

ACRTI Practice

5. I do the following when I work with adults, youth, and children who access our services...

6. I do the following when I work with adult participants...

7. I do the following when I work with parents and caregivers...

8. I do the following when I work with children and youth...

9. I do the following...

10. Please indicate how true the following statements are for you...

These items focus on elements of ACRTI practices that staff members may integrate into their work with survivors, children, and youth. If there are any questions in these sections that are not applicable to your program, you can omit those.
Scoring Reverse Coded Items

Question 10 is different from Questions 5 through 9. It has two REVERSE CODED items: this means that it was written so that a higher score (“Very true,” “Mostly true”) actually indicates a lower level of practice for the item. The following items have been reverse-coded:

a. I feel limited in my ability to work effectively with participants of all sexual orientations.

e. I feel limited in my ability to work with participants who have experienced challenges because of their use of alcohol and/or other drugs.

A “Very true” or “Mostly true” response to Item A indicates that the staff member completing this assessment may not be responsive to the needs of survivors with diverse sexual orientations. A “Very true” or “Mostly true” response to Item E indicates that the staff member may be experiencing challenges in working with participants who have had problems related to their use of substances.

The rest of the items use standard coding, which means that a higher score (“Very true,” “Mostly true”) indicates a higher level of practice for that item.
Questions 10, 11, and 12 all contain reverse coded items. Scoring these sections takes some extra time and care, though once you get the hang of it, it is not difficult. Within these sections, the response items have the following numeric weights:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard Scoring</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<th>Very True</th>
<th>Mostly True</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Not true at all</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not apply</td>
<td>Not true at all</td>
<td>A Little True</td>
<td>Mostly True</td>
<td>Very True</td>
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</tbody>
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These weights are correct for all of the standard scored items. For the reverse coded items, you will need to do a simple score conversion. (See chart on next page.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reverse Scoring</th>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does not apply</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
<th>Does not apply</th>
<th>A Little True</th>
<th>Not true at all</th>
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</table>
Let’s look at an example to explain this conversion. In Question 11, Item a is a standard scored item: “I have strategies to cope effectively with stressful situations at work.”

A score of 4 (Very true) indicates that the program is likely doing well in providing ACRTI supports in that area. Compare this to Item I: “I am sometimes too uncomfortable to raise issues or express concerns at work.”

As written, a score of 4 (Very true) means the opposite of what a score for Item a means: in this case, the program is likely not doing well in providing ACRTI supports in that area. However, if for Item I, we use the conversion chart above and switch the numeric weight from 4 to 1, the meaning of the item plus the meaning of the numeric weight are now both in alignment with all of the standard scored items.

ACRTI Organizational Supports

11. Please indicate how true the following statements are for you.

Question 11 assesses how well the program is doing in providing ACRTI supports throughout the organization and for staff members. It includes a mix of items that are reverse coded and that use standard coding. Reverse coded items include:

b. I don't have enough opportunities to reflect on my work with a supervisor without fear of judgment.

e. My job allows few opportunities to participate in social change work related to domestic and sexual violence.

i. I am sometimes too uncomfortable to raise issues or express concerns at work.

l. I worry that becoming more trauma-informed will negatively affect my work.

All other items are standard scored.

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ACRTI Supervisory Practice and Supports

12. Please indicate how true the following statements are for you.

13. Please indicate how often you do the following in supervising staff:

The final two sections of this survey are only for program leadership and staff members who provide supervision. Both assess ways that supervisors and
program leadership utilize ACRTI practices in their work with the staff members they support. Question 12 has a mix of standard scored and reverse coded items. The reverse coded items are:

c. In providing supervision, I find it challenging to navigate conversations about how culture and identity come into play in providing services.

f. I have difficulty communicating clearly with staff about how to do trauma-informed work.

h. In providing supervision, I find it challenging to navigate conversations about how personal and trauma-related experiences can affect practice.

i. My confidence in my ability to provide supervision on trauma-related issues is limited.

l. I rarely have time to reflect on my own responses to staff.

The remainder of the items in Question 12, as well as all of the items in Question 13, are standard scored.

Scoring and Interpreting Your Program’s Results

There are two basic ways to look at results from the Trauma-Informed Practice Survey, each of which will yield different insights and nuances: counts and averages. Both can be done with a calculator, paper and pencil, or with a spreadsheet (like Excel or Google Sheets).

Counts

The first way to score the data is through calculating counts. To calculate counts, tally the number and percentage of participants who choose each option for every item. This simple calculation can yield crucial feedback for your program. For example, let’s look at Question 5, Item F: “I do the following when I work with adults, youth, and children who access our services...Try to put myself in their shoes.”

There are five response options: Always (95-100% of the time), Most of the time (60-94% of the time), Often (40-59% of the time), Occasionally (10-39% of the time), Rarely/never (0%-9% of the time). Participants can also select “Does not apply.”
To calculate the counts for this item, look at the responses from all participants and tally the number of participants who selected each option of Always, Most of the time, Often, Occasionally, and Rarely/never. You will also need to note the number of participants who selected "Does not apply" or skipped this item.

Here is an example of what this might look like for your program if 22 participants completed this survey:

- 5 participants selected “Always” = 5
- 7 participants selected “Most of the time” = 7
- 5 participants selected “Often” = 5
- 2 participants selected “Occasionally” = 2
- 1 participant selected “Rarely/never” = 1
- 1 participant selected “Does not apply” = 1
- 1 participant skipped this item = 1

**Missing and “I Don’t Know” responses:**

Most of the time, you can simply omit these when you are calculating percentages. However, if you notice that more than a few people are selecting them, then it is important to consider this in interpreting your results. This may be helpful information for your program in itself.

From here, you can calculate the percentages of participants who selected each response option. Before doing this, make sure to omit the number of participants who selected “Does not apply” or skipped the question. This means that you will be using 20, not 22, in calculating percentages: 22 (total number of responses) minus 1 (“I don’t know” response) minus 1 (skipped) equals 20.

- 5 out of 20 selected “Always” = 5 / 20 = .25, or 25%
- 7 out of 20 selected “Most of the time” = 7 / 20 = .35, or 35%
- 5 out of 20 selected “Often” = 5 / 20 = .25, or 25%
- 2 out of 20 selected “Occasionally” = 2 / 20 = .10, or 10%
- 1 out of 20 selected “Rarely/never” = 1 / 20 = .05, or 5%

With this information, you can better understand the experiences of staff members in your program.
Averages

Another approach to understanding your data is utilizing averages (also known as means). As compared to counts, averages can help you to have a better overall big picture understanding of results across items. While it may be easier to calculate averages using a spreadsheet, you can also do this using a calculator, paper, and pen.

We will again use Question 5, Item F as an example: “I do the following when I work with adults, youth, and children who access our services... Try to put myself in their shoes.” Each response option has a value assigned to it: “Always” = 5, “Most of the time” = 4, “Often” = 3, “Occasionally” = 2, and “Rarely/never” = 1. Now, let’s look at the counts that you have already calculated. You will need to multiply the number of people who selected each option by the value assigned to each item. Do not include the number of participants who selected “does not apply” or who skipped the item.

- Always: 5 people selected this x the value of 5 (5 x 5) = 25
- Most of the time: 7 people selected this x the value of 4 (7 x 4) = 28
- Often: 5 people selected this x the value of 3 (5 x 3) = 15
- Occasionally: 2 people selected this x the value of 2 (2 x 2) = 4
- Rarely/never: 1 person selected this x the value of 1 (1 x 1) = 1

Next, add up all of the multiplied values. In this case, the total will be 73 (25 + 28 + 15 + 4 + 1 = 73). To figure out the overall mean score for this question, divide 73 by 20 (the total number of responses minus “I don’t know” and skipped) and you will get your mean score, which is 3.65 (73 / 20 = 3.65). This information tells you that, on average, respondents are somewhere between “Often” and “Most of the time” this item.

Average scores are powerful because they provide a basis for comparison. Your program can compare and rank the means for all items to better understand the areas in which staff members report the highest and lowest scores. You can also calculate an overall average across each section. Average scores can also be used to track changes over time, if you administer the Trauma-Informed Practice Survey for Staff more than once. This may be particularly helpful if your program is instituting new trauma-informed policies or services, as you can document differences in responses in various stages of program change.
Understanding your results

Once you calculate your Trauma-Informed Practice Survey for Staff scores, the next step is to make meaning of them for your program. It is essential to work with a representative group of staff members at all levels, or all staff members, to interpret the results from the survey. This can provide valuable insights that may not emerge if, for example, a few members of the administrative team interpret the data.

Observing patterns

When you inspect your data, pay attention to patterns. Within any given score is a broad range of experiences. There may be clusters of staff members who have different experiences than others, which would be important to understand in thinking about programmatic policies and improvements. For example, if two-thirds of your staff selects “Mostly true” for an item, and one-third selects “Not true at all,” then this is an important indicator to examine your results more deeply. Why is this difference occurring?

Another thing to consider is missed items and “I don’t know” responses. If you notice a spike in either missed or “I don’t know” responses for a given item, then be curious about why that might be.

Finally, this survey covers a range of themes in providing ACRTI services, across several items and through each section. You might, for example, notice that your program has higher scores on items about understanding the effects of trauma but lower scores on supporting survivors who use substances. This should then be flagged for discussion and further exploration.
Background information

You can utilize the Background Information section to better understand trends within your program’s staff. For example, if your program elects to collect information about staff members’ race and ethnicity, the information can be used in service of advancing racial equity within your program. Are there notable differences by race or ethnicity? If so, how does this connect to the overall culture and feel of your program? Do you see a connection between the results and the retention or attrition of staff, particularly staff of color? Are any groups of staff members struggling with providing culturally responsive services, as per your results? How do these results connect to the communities your program serves?

As a reminder, if your program is small or not particularly diverse, the benefits gained from collecting this information must be weighed against the potential for the identification of individual responses, which could be emotionally unsafe for some, particularly in programs that have had struggles around trust and racial equity.

It is important to review results by staff role: this will make it easier to see whether there are departments within your program that would benefit from additional ACRTI training or supports. Additionally, depending on your program, by looking at results by staff role, you may also be able to layer in an understanding of pay scale differences. Are staff members in lower-paying roles having different experiences than staff members with higher pay? If so, why might that be? How does that connect to the stresses inherent in specific roles versus rate of compensation? Are roles stratified by race and/or ethnicity in your program? How do you see these results in the context of your program’s culture and feel? In addition, you can look at the responses for all direct services staff versus supervisors: are there any differences between these two groups? If so, why may that be?

Finally, examining the data you have collected on tenure within the organization as well as previous experience in doing trauma-informed work is critical. With this information, it can be helpful to consider it alongside any information your program has on-hand for when trauma-informed trainings have occurred or ACRTI-related policies have been enacted.
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