

GLOSSARY: Common terms for frameworks, initiatives, and approaches that address trauma

This glossary includes definitions of four commonly used terms that refer to frameworks, initiatives, and approaches that address trauma. It is intended to provide an overarching understanding of these terms based on current research and practice to inform your work in supporting students experiencing trauma. There is much overlap across these terms, as they are highly related, and the glossary should not necessarily be viewed as a continuum.

Trauma-informed 	Trauma-sensitive 	Trauma-responsive 	Trauma-skilled 
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Term originated in the behavioral health field and refers to organizational initiatives and practices, including at schools.⁵ • A broad framework for delivery of services in a way that incorporates an understanding of trauma and its impacts across populations, settings, and systems.^{1,5} • Comprises 4 Rs: a program, organization, or system that realizes the widespread impact of trauma; recognizes signs and symptoms of trauma; responds by integrating knowledge of trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, and seeks to resist re-traumatization.^{4,5} • Practices 6 fundamental principles: (1) safety; (2) trustworthiness and transparency; (3) peer support; (4) collaboration and mutuality; (5) empowerment, voice, and choice; and (6) cultural, historical, and gender issues.⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely refers to school-based initiatives and practices.¹ • Includes ongoing efforts that may require shifts or changes in overarching vision/mission, perspectives, practices, and policies.³ • All aspects of the school culture and environment including staff professional development; engagement with families, staff, and students; and policies and procedures are grounded in an understanding of trauma and its impacts.³ • School staff better recognize potential symptoms of trauma, which impacts daily interactions and classroom practices.³ • Promotes resiliency and coping skills for all students (Tier 1).⁴ • Appropriately refers students experiencing potential symptoms of trauma for additional (Tier 2–3) supports.⁴ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refers to organizational initiatives and practices, including at schools.³ • Provides targeted practices and supports for individuals who are experiencing potential trauma symptoms.³ • Generally involves highly-trained specialists (such as behavioral specialists or mental health professionals) who provide relevant services (such as screening and assessment, referrals, and intervention programs).^{3,6} • Corresponds to changes in structures, practices, policies, and procedures.⁶ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Largely refers to school-based initiatives that equip individuals with the skills they need to address trauma-related issues.² • Systematic, shared understanding and approach and common language around trauma across all individuals in a program, organization, or system.² • All staff implement consistent, proactive, and deliberate behaviors and practices to support all students, with a focus on students impacted by trauma.²

See the resources below for more information:

¹ American Institutes for Research (2020). *Trauma-sensitive schools training package*. National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments. <https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/trauma-sensitive-schools-training-package>

² Gailer, J., Addis, S., & Dunlap, L. (2018). *Improving school outcomes for trauma-impacted students*. National Dropout Prevention Center. <http://dropoutprevention.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Trauma-Skilled-Schools-Model-Final-I.pdf>

³ Missouri Department of Mental Health and Partners. (2019). *The Missouri model: A developmental framework for trauma informed approaches*. <https://dmh.mo.gov/media/pdf/missouri-model-developmental-framework-trauma-informed-approaches>

⁴ National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (2017). *Creating, supporting, and sustaining trauma-informed schools: a system framework*. https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/creating_supporting_sustaining_trauma_informed_schools_a_systems_framework.pdf

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2014). *SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach*. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4884.pdf>

⁶ Wisconsin Children's Mental Health Collective Impact (2017). *The Wisconsin continuum of trauma-informed care*. <https://children.wi.gov/Documents/TICWisconsinModel2017.pdf>

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