



# Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Facilitation Guide

The *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module is intended for all school personnel, including administrators, instructional staff, and non-instructional staff. The module familiarizes school staff with the concept of trauma sensitivity and includes examples of trauma-sensitive strategies that can be employed schoolwide. Accompanying the module is a series of handouts, including checklists, activities, practice guides, and discussion questions, for supporting staff in adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.

The *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module may be viewed independently by staff; however, due to the amount and depth of the information presented and the multiple opportunities for activity and discussion, it is recommended that schools use a group training format. This facilitation guide accompanies the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module and includes recommendations for how to facilitate in-person group training sessions using the module and accompanying handouts.

## Intended Use

The information in this guide is intended for school personnel who are facilitating group training sessions with staff using the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module and handouts. This guide includes an outline of the main sections of the module and notes approximate length of recorded narration and related handouts for each section to assist facilitators in planning for training sessions.

## Preparing to Use This Facilitation Guide

Facilitators using this guide should be familiar with the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module and all accompanying handouts and have a clear plan for using these materials with staff. Facilitators should read through the entire guide and familiarize themselves with the proposed training process prior to conducting any training sessions. Training participants should have viewed the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource and/or should have participated in an in-person training on trauma and its impact before the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* training is introduced. Before facilitators begin using the materials, here are some strategies to consider.

### Address the Difficult Nature of the Material.

The *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module includes information about trauma and its effects that may be distressing to some people. When facilitating activities, be sure to acknowledge the potentially difficult nature of the material and encourage people to take breaks and ask for support as needed. It is also important for facilitators to be aware of the potential challenges for staff associated with adopting a new approach. As facilitators, it is important to create a safe space for staff members to share honestly. If open communication and transparency are difficult for the audience with whom facilitators will be sharing this information, facilitators should consider these dynamics when planning for the training. For example, facilitators may consider how staff are grouped and provide opportunities for small-group sharing when large-group conversations are difficult.

### Set Ground Rules.

Trauma is a sensitive and difficult topic that may trigger trauma-related memories and emotions for participants that could influence participants' responses during the training session. Proposing to adopt new practices in schools may also be unsettling for some participants. Setting some ground rules can help set the tone for a respectful, thoughtful, and safe discussion that maintains clear boundaries. Facilitators can have participants create ground rules, or facilitators can simply set the ground rules.

Suggested ground rules include the following:

- Be respectful of the opinions of other participants even if you disagree.
- Be aware of the degree of personal information that is appropriate to share.
- Step up, step back: If you haven't spoken or contributed, do so if you feel comfortable. If you have been speaking and sharing a lot, let other participants take a turn.
- Don't have side conversations or talk over other participants.

### Consider Different Methods of Facilitation.

The following are some options for facilitating discussions and activities:

- *Individual reflection.* Consider having participants write down their responses to questions or complete an activity individually before asking them to share with the group. This option gives everyone an opportunity to collect their thoughts and may help participants feel more comfortable about sharing in the group setting.

- Small-group discussion or pairs. Have participants split into smaller groups (3–5 people) to discuss a question or topic or to review an activity. Smaller groups allow everyone to participate and have their voices heard. Facilitators can then ask groups to share a summary of thoughts within the full group.
- Large-group discussion. Address a question or topic to the whole group and then facilitate the discussion.

## Materials

Facilitators may need the following materials for the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* training:

- Flip chart
- Markers
- Printed handouts of the activities and discussion questions for participants
- Extra pens, pencils, and paper for participants to complete activities

## BUILDING TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOLS TRAINING

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The *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module is best viewed in a group setting, with a lead facilitator or facilitators who can oversee the use of the module and handouts as part of professional development sessions. The training may be conducted in its entirety or broken into segments as outlined in this guide. The following outline of the module includes a brief summary of the content and approximate length of each section, along with recommendations for when to pause and reflect as identified in the module. Time estimates for each section consider the duration of the recorded narration on each slide, as well as time for discussions and activities. Actual timing will vary based on the needs and interests of the group, and facilitators may need to factor in additional time beyond what is estimated. Facilitators should factor in time for introductions, to pose questions, to take breaks, and to facilitate discussions and activities as they prepare to conduct a training using these materials. Facilitators may modify the proposed guidelines as needed to suit the training context.

### 1. Welcome (approximate length of narration: 6 minutes)

- The welcome section introduces participants to the topics covered in the module and includes directions for how to use the module, intended learning objectives, and clarification of common terms used throughout the module.
- Facilitators may consider how they want to introduce the module beyond what is provided in the welcome narrative.

## 2. Introduction to Trauma (approximate length of narration: 12 minutes / approximate length with discussion: 25 minutes)

- This section includes a brief review of what is meant by the term *trauma*; types of trauma; rates of trauma among children and adults; and examples of how trauma affects students, parents, school staff, and the school community. (*Note.* Staff should already have received an introductory training on trauma and its effects prior to viewing this module; however, if some staff are new to the material, this section provides enough of an overview to ensure that everyone has some common understanding of the concepts.)
- **Slide 2.1** introduces what will be covered in the section. Facilitators should review this slide aloud with the group.



Discussion: When the facilitators reach **Slide 2.5**, they may consider pausing after the group listens to each narrative segment related to how trauma affects students, parents, staff, and schools to ask participants to share their thoughts. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this discussion.**

It is recommended that facilitators allow time to complete this section and the next section, Introduction to Trauma Sensitivity, in one training session.

## 3. Introduction to Trauma Sensitivity (approximate length of narration: 12 minutes / approximate length with discussion and activity: 40 minutes)

- This section introduces participants to the concept of a trauma-sensitive school; provides a rationale for why schools are adopting a schoolwide trauma-sensitive approach; distinguishes between traditional and trauma-sensitive perspectives; introduces the core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach; and outlines a framework for embedding trauma-sensitive programming in schools across six key domains.
- **Slide 3.1** introduces what will be covered in the section. Facilitators should review this slide aloud with the group.





Discussion: On **Slide 3.6**, after the group listens to the narration, the facilitators click on each of the pictures at the bottom of the slide to review examples of differences between traditional and trauma-sensitive perspectives with the group. This is a good time to pause and facilitate a conversation with staff about the differing perspectives and which perspective participants believe is taken most often in their school. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this discussion.**




Activity: Follow the prompts on **Slide 3.9** to use the *Applying the Core Principles Worksheet* to facilitate a discussion related to how the school is currently upholding the core principles of trauma sensitivity. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this activity.**

**Note.** This may be a good stopping point if facilitators do not have time to complete the next section related to Domain 1. Facilitators choose how they want to segment the remaining content across the six domains based on time available for professional development. It is recommended that facilitators fully complete any started domain within the same training session. Facilitators may cover more than one domain in a training session.

#### 4. Domain 1: Support Staff Development (approximate length of narration: 3 minutes / approximate length with discussion and activity: 45 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for supporting staff development related to trauma-sensitivity, including key topics for professional development activities.
- **Slide 4.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to supporting staff development. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.
  -  Discussion: **Slides 4.2** and **4.3** include suggested training topics for staff. Facilitators may consider pausing to talk with participants about training topics that have been introduced to staff and which topics staff are interested in learning more about. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this discussion.**
  -  Activity: Follow the prompts on **Slide 4.4** to use the *Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet* with staff to explore strategies for recognizing and addressing secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma in the school. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this activity.**

#### 5. Domain 2: Create a Safe and Supportive Environment (approximate length of narration: 20 minutes / approximate length with practice scenarios and activities: 70 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for creating a safe and supportive environment in the classroom and schoolwide, including ways to establish physical and emotional safety, recognize and reduce trauma triggers, and prevent and manage crises.
- **Slide 5.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to creating a safe and supportive environment. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.
  -  Practice Scenarios: Within this section, facilitators will guide the group through a trio of practice scenarios (**Slide 5.5**) designed to assist participants in putting trauma-sensitivity into practice. Facilitators should review each scenario with the group and facilitate a discussion about which answer to choose. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for the practice scenarios.**



Activities: Follow the prompts on **Slide 5.6** to use the *Mapping Triggers and Opportunities Activity* and *Navigating Crises Worksheet* with staff to apply trauma-related concepts discussed in this section to daily work. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for these activities.**

## 6. Domain 3: Assess Needs and Provide Support (approximate length of narration: 4 minutes / approximate length with activities: 40 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for assessing student needs and providing supports, including ways to assess for trauma and trauma-related service needs and provide trauma-sensitive supports.
- **Slide 6.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to assessing needs and providing support for students exposed to trauma. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.

(Note. This section is particularly targeted to student services staff, such as school counselors, school social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, or other mental health providers who coordinate and/or provide social and emotional supports. Facilitators may choose to view this section with all staff so that everyone is aware of the role that student services staff play in supporting trauma-sensitivity, or facilitators may choose to view this section with student services staff alone. Handouts are tailored to student services staff.)



Activities: Follow the prompts on **Slide 6.3** to use the *Trauma-Sensitive Assessment and Planning Checklist* and the *Guidelines for Adopting a Multitiered Approach to Addressing Trauma* to identify strategies for ensuring trauma-sensitive assessment and support strategies. Student services staff consider how they can support trauma-sensitivity universally and individually with students exposed to trauma as needed. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for these activities.**

## 7. Domain 4: Build Social and Emotional Skills (approximate length of narration: 4 minutes / approximate length with activity: 30 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for building students' social and emotional skills across key areas that include self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making.
- **Slide 7.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to building social and emotional skills. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.



Activity: Follow the prompts on **Slide 7.3** to use the *Social and Emotional Competencies Checklist* to facilitate a discussion about how training participants currently support social and emotional learning for students. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this activity.**

## 8. Domain 5: Collaborate With Students and Families (approximate length of narration: 4 minutes / approximate length with activities: 35 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for collaborating with students and families that reflect the core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach.
- **Slide 8.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to collaborating with students and families. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.



Activity: This section includes a group activity (**Slides 8.3 – 8.6**) that allows training participants to apply what they are learning related to trauma sensitivity to daily interactions with students and families. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for the practice activity built into the module.**



Activity: Follow the prompts on **Slide 8.7** to use the *Strategies for Collaboration* handout to lead a discussion with training participants about specific strategies for collaborating with families that align with the core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this activity.**

## 9. Domain 6: Adapt Policies and Procedures (approximate length of narration: 3 minutes / approximate length with activity: 25 minutes)

- This section offers examples of trauma-sensitive policies and procedures related to school discipline practices, communication with families, and safety procedures.
- **Slide 9.1** introduces the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to adapting policies and procedures. Facilitators should review the key elements with the group.



Activity: Follow the prompts on **Slide 9.3** to use the *Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures* to lead a discussion with training participants about their school's current policies and procedures. **Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this activity.**

## 10. Sustaining Trauma Sensitivity (approximate length of narration: 3 minutes / approximate length with discussion: 20 minutes)

- This section includes strategies for sustaining a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide, including maintaining a trauma-sensitive work group, involving youth and families, and evaluating impact.
- **Slide 10.1** introduces the key elements associated with sustaining a trauma-sensitive school. Facilitators should review key elements with the group.



Discussion: Use the reflection questions on **Slide 10.3** to consider next steps for the school related to trauma sensitivity. ***Facilitators may need to factor in additional time for this discussion.***

## 11. Conclusion and Next Steps (approximate length of narration: 1 minute)

- This brief, final section includes a review of the learning objectives for the module, a link to a feedback survey about the module, and a list of resources related to the content covered in the module.
- Facilitators should decide how to conclude the training based on the school's next steps related to trauma sensitivity. Facilitators should have a sense of next steps prior to conducting this training. For example, facilitators may follow up with a staff survey about what participants thought of the training and what they would like to see happen next.

**Note.** Facilitators should refer to the *Action Guide* for a multiphased approach to supporting the school in adopting a trauma-sensitive approach, including recommended next steps after introducing the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* component of the training package.



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## Disclaimer

The contents of the Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package were designed and written under the U.S. Department of Education (Department) Contract Numbers ED-ESE-12-O-0035 and ED-ESE-16-A-0002 by the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) operated by American Institutes for Research®. The content and views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policies of the Department and should not assume endorsement by the federal government. No official endorsement by the Department of any product, commodity, service, or enterprise mentioned in this publication is intended or should be inferred. For the reader's convenience, this publication contains information about and from outside organizations, including material obtained by way of hyperlinks and URLs. Inclusion of such information does not constitute the Department's endorsement.

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