Representation Matters: Using Trauma-Informed Language and Imagery in Victim Services

November 18, 2021
2:00–3:30 p.m. (eastern time)

Presenters:
Aubrey Lloyd, Director, OVC Human Trafficking Collective
Chief Fred Fletcher (ret.), Chattanooga Police Department

The material presented during today’s webinar will be available on the OVC TTAC Webinars page. This session will be recorded and will begin shortly.

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- Today’s webinar will be recorded and made available on the OVC TTAC website, along with a copy of the PowerPoint.
Today’s Presenters

Aubrey Lloyd, Director, OVC Human Trafficking Collective

Chief Fred Fletcher (ret.), Chattanooga Police Department
Objectives

01
As a result of this webinar, participants will be able to:

02
List two principles of trauma-informed care

03
Describe two ways trauma informed language enhances resiliency/empowers victims of crime

04
Identify at least two approaches to encourage the use of trauma-informed imagery and language in victim service organizations and with their partners and community stakeholders.
Sensational defined:

presenting information in a way that is intended to provoke public interest and excitement, at the expense of accuracy; causing great public interest and excitement

Synonyms

- causing great public interest and excitement
- overdramatized
- exaggerated
- startling
- shocking
- appalling
- thrilling/exciting
- newsworthy
- scandalous; juicy;
- graphic
- explicit
What do we mean by *Storytelling*?

- Outreach
- Marketing
- Fundraising
- Informal/ Formal partnership meetings
- Budgets
Why do we use sensational images and language?

Victim Services

- To demonstrate urgency
- To grab attention
- To startle/shock into concern
- Help identify
Why do we use sensational images and language?

*Law Enforcement*

- Get community’s attention
- Promote safety
- Garner support
- Acculturation
5 Trauma Responses

Physiological Reactions: The 5 F’s

**Autonomic Nervous System**

- **Fight**
  - Physical aggression: attacker may be smaller/weaker
  - Verbal aggression, e.g., saying “no”

- **Flight**
  - Running, backing away or hiding
  - If there is somewhere to escape or hide

- **Freeze**
  - Tonic immobility
  - Involuntary response
  - Less chance of injury

- **Flop/Fawn**
  - Collapse and play dead
  - After freeze fails, conserves energy, wound heal

- **Friend**
  - Trauma bonding (attach)/Stockholm Syndrome
  - Social engagement
  - Prolonged or infant trauma

**Parasympathetic Nervous System**

Adapted from traumadissociation.com (Schore, 2005; Ledick, 2007)
What does it cost?

- Re-traumatizing/re-exploiting survivors, audience members, presenters
- Loss of accurate information
  - Attention is paid to sensationalism
  - Audience less likely to recall facts
  - More likely to remember sensational items as facts
  - Disrupts the longevity and resiliency of our field(s)
- Creates space for conspiracy theories and misinformation to thrive, because it gives permission to misinformed individuals to use and replicate sensationalist images/language
- Prevents and limits real victims of crime from being identified, because they don’t match what is seen in sensationalized materials
- Raises the bar – further promotes sensational language/imagery
What can be done differently?
Trauma-Informed Approach to Presentations

- SAFETY
- TRUSTWORTHINESS & TRANSPARENCY
- COLLABORATION & MUTUALITY
- EMPOWERMENT, VOICE & CHOICE
- CULTURAL, HISTORICAL AND GENDER ISSUES
- PEER SUPPORT
Review before you share

Realizes

Recognizes

Responds

Resists Re-Traumatization
Advocate for change

• Push back on the use of any trauma narrative
• Use ethically framed and reliable sources
• Align training and outreach with actual goals
• Understand the needs of and gaps for victims in your community
Practice Ethical Storytelling

• Prioritizes factual information
• Presents diverse imaging that accurately reflects survivors
• Presents images/language of healing/hope over images of trauma
• Thinks critically about data included and the credibility of the sources, and provides references
• Avoids victim blaming language
• Avoids language that centers the provider over the victim (i.e., “my victims,” “I rescued/restored/saved”)
• Centers the survivors as the lead in their own story (i.e., “they sought help, they accessed/obtained/achieved”)
Use data driven storytelling
National Crime Reporting

- Motor Vehicle Theft: 75%
- Robbery: 54%
- Rape/Sexual Assault: 23%

2020 National Crime Victim Survey data from BJS
Kansas Data Story

Non-Gang Affiliated Offenders make up 83% of the data sample (417 people)

77% had at least 1 or more victimizations.

Average Number of Victimization (Victim of Violence, DV, SA, and Crimes against Family/Children) in the last 5 years: 4

OVCTTAC Data Analysis, 2021
Practice a Different Dialogue

Who knows someone who has had cancer?
What images do we see?
What language do we hear?
Tips to Encourage Change

• Pay attention to what you highlight or hide
• Get informed and up to date
• Stay consistent
• Stay optimistic – small changes matter
• Show ways this will better align with overall goal and purpose
  o Support for survivors, movement past apathy, cost savings??
Poll:

What can you do to change your storytelling now?
Training Resource
Fact Sheets

Project Trust Trauma
Informed Outreach Toolkit

Ethical Storytelling –
Discovering ways for non-profits to ethically tell stories
Final Questions?
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Evaluation QR Code

OVCTTAC National Webinars - Representation Matters: Using Trauma-Informed Language and Imagery in Victim Services

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