10 Key Ingredients for Trauma-Informed Care

As health care providers become aware of the harmful effects of trauma on physical and mental health, they are increasingly recognizing the value of trauma-informed approaches to care.

What is Trauma?
The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes trauma as events or circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening, which result in adverse effects on the individual’s functioning and well-being.

What is the Impact of Trauma on Health?
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, conducted by the CDC and Kaiser Permanente, revealed that the more an individual is exposed to a variety of stressful and potentially traumatic experiences, the greater the risk for chronic health conditions and health-risk behaviors later in life.

How can Providers Become Trauma-Informed?
Trauma-informed care acknowledges that understanding a patient’s life experiences is key to potentially improving engagement and outcomes while lowering unnecessary utilization. In order to be successful, trauma-informed care must be adopted at the organizational and clinical levels.

Organizational practices reorient the culture of a health care setting to address the potential for trauma in patients and staff:
1. Lead and communicate about being trauma-informed
2. Engage patients in organizational planning
3. Train both clinical and non-clinical staff
4. Create a safe physical and emotional environment
5. Prevent secondary traumatic stress in staff
6. Build a trauma-informed workforce

Clinical practices address the impact of trauma on individual patients:
7. Involve patients in the treatment process
8. Screen for trauma
9. Train staff in trauma-specific treatments
10. Engage referral sources and partner organizations

For more details, read the brief, Key Ingredients for Successful Trauma-Informed Care Implementation. Visit www.TraumaInformedCare.chcs.org.