



Kinship Quarterly

Strengthening Families

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IN THIS ISSUE: TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

BECOME TRAUMA INFORMED

Caregivers play an important role in helping children and youth recover from traumatic events. The more you learn about how traumatic events affect children, the more you will understand the reasons for your child's behaviors, and emotions, and the better prepared you will be to help. In this issue we will discuss trauma and trauma informed care.

What Is Trauma?

People often use the word "trauma" to refer to a traumatic event. A trauma is a scary, dangerous, or violent event that can happen to anyone. Not all dangerous or scary events are traumatic events, however.

What Is a Traumatic Event?

A *traumatic event* is a scary, dangerous, or violent event. An event can be traumatic when we face or witness an immediate threat to ourselves or to a loved one, often followed by serious injury or harm. We feel terror, helplessness, or horror at what we are experiencing and at our inability to stop

it or protect ourselves or others from it. Family violence, child abuse and neglect are just a couple of examples.

What Is Child Traumatic Stress?

When a child has had one or more traumatic events, and has reactions that continue and affect his or her daily life long after the events have ended, we call it Child Traumatic Stress.

If your child is experiencing traumatic stress you might notice the following signs:

- Difficulty sleeping and nightmares
- Refusing to go to school
- Lack of appetite
- Bed-wetting or other regression in behavior
- Interference with developmental milestones
- Anger
- Getting into fights at school or fighting more with siblings
- Difficulty paying attention to teachers at school and to parents at home
- Avoidance of scary situations
- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Nervousness or jumpiness

- Intrusive memories of what happened
- Play that includes recreating the event.

Not all children who experience a traumatic event will develop symptoms of child traumatic stress. Children's reactions can vary depending on their age, developmental level, trauma history, and other factors.



What is a trauma reminder?

At times, children may feel anxious, nervous, or scared when they encounter places, people, sights, sounds, smells, and feelings that remind them of past traumatic experiences, even years afterwards. These trauma reminders can bring on distressing mental images, thoughts, and emotional/physical reactions. Common reminders (also

called triggers) include: sudden loud noises, destroyed buildings, the smell of fire, ambulance or police sirens, locations where they experienced the trauma, encountering people with disabilities, funerals, anniversaries of the trauma, and television or radio news about the event. Your child may not be consciously aware of these reminders, but it is important for you and others to anticipate reminders and to help the child recognize and cope with them. As parents/caregivers, you can let your child know how much you would like to help them whenever they are reminded of their experiences or losses. It is helpful to be open about how you are also still affected by reminders. As a family, you can then offer each other emotional support through physical comfort, understanding, and reassurance.

What can my family do to recover?

Family members may each react differently to a traumatic event that a child has experienced. Even in the closest of families, it is sometimes hard to remember that each of your family members may have a different reaction to a traumatic event. Reactions will differ, depending not only on the family member's age, developmental level, and own trauma history, but also on his or her relationship with the child and personal exposure to the event. While your world may feel changed forever after a traumatic event, you, your children and family members, and your community are more resilient than you might imagine. You do have a great ability to heal and return to feeling "normal" again. You can help your child recover by doing the following:

- Be patient. There is no correct timetable for healing. Some children will recover quickly. Others recover more slowly. Try not to push your child to "just get over it." Instead, reassure him or her that they do not need to feel guilty or bad about any feelings or thoughts.
- Explain to your child that he or she is not responsible for what happened. Children often blame themselves for events, even those completely out of their control.
- Assure your child that he or she is safe. Talk about the measures you are taking to keep him or her safe at home and about what measures his/her school is taking to ensure his or her safety at school.
- Maintain regular home (mealtime, bedtime) and school routines to support the process of recovery. Make sure your child continues to go to school and stays in school.
- Learn about the common reactions that children have to traumatic events.
- Take time to think about your own experience of your child's traumatic event and any past traumatic events you may have experienced. Your own trauma history and your feelings about your child's trauma event will influence how you react.
- Be patient. It may have taken years of trauma or abuse to get the child in his current state of mind. Learning to trust again is not likely to happen overnight.
- Consult a qualified mental health professional if your child's distress continues for several weeks. Ask your child's primary care physician or school for a referral to a mental health provider with experience with child traumatic stress.



There is no correct timetable for recovery. Some children will recover quickly. Others recover more slowly. Some families get better with time and the support of others. As a general rule, if your child's reactions (nightmares, recurrent thoughts, fears) have been getting worse instead of better, or your family is having ongoing distress, crises, or trouble meeting your children's needs, you should seek a referral for a qualified mental health professional (psychologist, clinical social worker, psychiatrist) with experience in assessing and treating

child traumatic stress or posttraumatic stress disorder. Going without help can have long-lasting negative consequences. Fortunately, however, entering treatment can have concrete, beneficial results that will help your child and your family feel better, grow stronger, and recover. For more information about trauma, see the resources listed in this issue. *National Child Traumatic Stress Network*

Did you know? ECI

The Health and Human Services Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) is a statewide program for families with children from birth to 36 months of age with developmental delays, disabilities, or certain medical diagnoses that may impact development.

ECI works with other state agencies and organizations that provide services for children and families in Texas. ECI builds partnerships with state and local agencies/organizations to help ensure families are connected to the resources and supports they need. One valuable resource that's helpful to families is the [Navigate Life Texas](#) (NLT) website.

The Texas Health and Human Services created the NLT website to inform and empower parents of children with disabilities or special healthcare needs. The NLT website was developed by parents, for parents. Most of the content is written by parents of children and adults with disabilities or special healthcare needs.

The NLT website includes information on many topics, such as: healthcare, education, insurance, medical diagnoses and transition to adulthood. There is also a section on how to connect with other parents where parents share their perspectives on challenges and rewards they have faced.

To find more resources of interest to families of children with developmental delays or disabilities, professionals who have an interest in families, and anyone interested in the well-being of young children and their families, visit the ECI Resource Guide. For information about ECI, visit hhs.texas.gov/eci

Safety

Halloween

- Plan costumes that are bright and reflective.
- Because masks can limit or block eyesight, consider non-toxic makeup and decorative hats as safer alternatives.
- When shopping for costumes, wigs and accessories look for and purchase those with a label clearly indicating they are flame resistant.
- Inspect your child's candy before allowing them to eat.

Thanksgiving

- Keep hot food out of the reach of little hands, be sure that pot handles and other dishes aren't close to the edge of the counter or table.
- Never hold a child while cooking, drinking or carrying hot foods or liquids.
- Have a fire extinguisher available not more than 10 feet from the stove

Christmas

- When purchasing an artificial tree, look for one that is fire resistant. When purchasing a cut tree, look for one that is freshly cut.
- Check all lights, bulbs, sockets and extension cords every year. Make sure nothing is frayed, cracked or broken.
- Always buy toys that are labelled for the correct age range, even if your child is advanced for their age.

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Resources

- [Texas Kinship Caregivers Facebook Page](#)
- [Star Health](#) (new enhancements include: Care Grants, Expanded Vision Benefit, Over-the-Counter Services, CentAccount / azA, Boys and Girls Club, Sports/Camp Physicals, 7-day Follow-Up Incentives, Online Mental Health Resources)
- Free [Trauma Training](#)
- [Bill Assistance](#)
- [Kinship Manual](#)
- [Thanksgiving Assistance](#)

Region 8 Kinship Support Group



Region 8 Christmas in July



Region 7 Easter Egg Hunt





**Kinship
Quarterly
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We all have the
power
to stop
child abuse.



TEXAS
Department of Family
and Protective Services
Child Protective Services

Report abuse, neglect, or exploitation of children, the elderly, or
people with disabilities at
(800) 252-5400 or www.txabusehotline.org.