

Here are some anonymous youth worker quotes about Creating A Culture of Care from our recently completed evaluation visits.

What Makes Trauma Informed Care Work?

“Persistence and trust”

Which of the cores strategies helped the most?

“Debriefing (sooner after the event. Asking ‘what really triggered you in the moment? What escalated you?’ and using positive communication with youth.”

Changes from this CCC initiative ?

“Now we have more informal conversations with kids about their triggers...and, they are more open to talking about their triggers...”

What’s your biggest ‘Lightbulb moment’ during this initiative?

“when the youth has a ‘lightbulb’ moment!”

What has been the most rewarding part for you about participating in this initiative?

“Being able to plant a seed of change so the youth get something they’ve never had before; even just a smile from someone else.”

Creating a Culture Of Care



Sharing Our Strategies and Successes

Summer 2014 Newsletter

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Creating a Culture of Care is an initiative to minimize restraint, seclusion, and other treatment practices that may re-traumatize vulnerable youth in our care.

An initiative of



With funding and support



Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
ADVANCING RECOVERY AND WELLNESS IN TEXAS

A Note From The Editor



Dear Residential Treatment Center Staff and Other Culture of Care Supporters,

We hope you are enjoying our quarterly newsletters. Don't forget to share them with the rest of your staff and your community partners! We are excited to showcase articles, stories, and photos from RTCs around Texas.

This summer, we have been traveling to all of our partner sites to evaluate the success of their work (and our support) to minimize restraint and seclusion while building more trauma-informed programs. We are fortunate to have had this

initiative extended until August 2015 so that we can analyze and share our progress – as well as offer lessons to other RTCs and youth services programs We look forward to hearing more of your success stories and to seeing many of you at the TNOYS 31st Annual Conference in August as we welcome national trauma-informed care experts Beth Caldwell and Kevin Huckshorn back to Texas! Thank you for your hard work,

-Lara O'Toole, LMSW and the TNOYS team
*Interested in being a part of a statewide Leadership Group on these topics? Email LOToole@tnoys.org

Meridell 's Family Day



Supervisor's Corner



When talking to youth about options for changing behavior, ask “What else could you do?” When they answer, reply (with feeling), “Good idea! What else might work?” When they give another one, say, “That could work (or something similar). Can you think of another idea?” At some point, you can then ask, “Which of those do you think will work best?” Give them a minute to answer... then finish with, “Great! Let me know how it turns out.”



Strategy 5 of the Six Core Strategies calls for increasing the engagement of family members in the care of their children and youth while in treatment (inclusion of consumers, children, families and external advocates in various roles and at all levels in the organization to assist in the reduction of seclusion and restraint).

Meridell Achievement Center's Family Day gives visiting family members an opportunity to learn about their child's treatment and to be a part of his or her recovery. According to clinical program director Amanda Moreno, Family Day begins with a meet-and-greet and then family members select workshops that focus on providing information regarding symptoms, triggers, and coping strategies for the child's return home.

“The workshops also provide an opportunity for parents to hear each other's stories and feel a sense of normalcy about their common experiences,” Moreno said. Family members have the opportunity to visit their child's residential unit, attend group therapy with their children, and enjoy a BBQ lunch together. Staff members also work with the children to put on a talent show. “Ultimately, our goal is that the children return home and be successful,” Moreno said. “Family Day is unique and important because we can incorporate the family in treatment and get them on board to help their children to be successful.”

Using Experiential Activities with Youth

There are times in every day, during every shift, when creative and flexible youth-workers can fit an experiential activity into their curriculum so it is helpful for youth-workers to have various kinds of activities in their bag of tricks! There are, of course, a few things to keep in mind when using experiential activities.

#1 is they should be FUNN ~~ "Functional Understanding Not Necessary" (see <http://blog.playmeo.com/what-is-funn/>). #2 is that there is, in any new group, a progression of activities from Icebreakers (Warm ups) to Trust-building Activities (building cooperation) to Problem Solving Initiatives. And, finally #3 is using the principle of Challenge by Choice; allowing youth to sit this one out if they want, while always encouraging them to participate at the level they feel most comfortable.

Warm Up Activity: "All My Neighbors" (Supplies = a piece of notebook paper or ½ sheet for each person) Group circles up with facilitator in the center; each person (except the facilitator) standing on their piece of paper. The facilitator calls these papers the participants' "houses". "You are standing on your house and I have no house here in the middle. I am going to make a statement about myself that is true and if it is true for you then you must move (walk) to another house. The only rule is that you cannot move next door" Whomever is left in the middle then makes a statement about themselves like this: All my neighbors who (true statement) [like, "All my neighbors who are wearing socks"... or "own a dog"... or "are friendly"] As the game progresses, the facilitator can lose, get in the circle and experiment with value statements or other statements that move in the direction of any desired outcomes, like "all my neighbors who did their homework" or "can use an I-message".

For more information about using activities, contact TNOYS or google "experiential activities", "Karl Rohnke", or "trust-building activities".



Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI)

Let's Get Together (Yeah, Yeah, Yeah!)

On Wednesday, May 7th, 2014 the Travis County Collaborative for Children (TCCC) convened an introductory seminar on Trust-Based Relational Intervention (TBRI). The all-day event was held at Grace Covenant Church in Austin, TX and was co-sponsored by Greenlights, an innovative Austin-based non-profit that specializes in organizational development.

The TCCC is interested in reframing Texas' approach to mental health and trauma, in the child welfare system and brought trainers Drs. Karyn Purvis and David Cross from Texas Christian University (TCU) in Ft. Worth to Austin to spearhead this change.

The day began with an introduction of the agenda by Judge Hathaway (Austin, TX) and a lively set of topics that enchanted, enlightened and visibly touched the audience. Attendees, mostly from Austin, included clinicians, counselors, educators, RTC administrators, faith-based organizations, juvenile justice workers, attorneys, judges, lobbyists, some TNOYS member-agencies and other non-profits!

The major framework for TBRI is Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). T-IC is a strengths-based approach to mental health care, and is especially valuable and indeed, crucial to equipping providers with tools to treat children with traumatic histories. Break-out topics of the event were TBRI: Trauma-Informed Care; Sensory Needs; Behavioral Change; and Systems Change. The introduction to TBRI began with the foundation of TIC, and moved from micro to mezzo to macro, tracking the application of TBRI and the many changes it can influence from an individual to a societal level.

One of the most striking aspects of TBRI is that it's practitioners are moving away from cognitive approaches, towards a holistic, person-in-environment approach that honors the development of "attachment" in consumers. TBRI provides an opportunity for clinicians, administrators and policy makers to nurture those they serve.

Dr. Purvis and Dr. Cross strategically chose Austin as the site of TCCC because they view Austin as an opportune location to introduce great change to Foster Care Re-design. Strategically, Austin is a wonderful platform for legislative change as it's the capitol and already attracts many change agents. TNOYS is excited to bear witness to TCCC and to participate as an advocate for youth empowerment and voice within the initiative.

TBRI and TCCC speak to the trends in Texas and the country. Along with TNOYS and the Hogg Foundation's Creating a Culture of Care initiative, Trauma-Informed Care is indeed the next innovation to impact the delivery of social services. We at TNOYS are excited about the possibilities!

Calming Garden at Roy Maas



Roy Maas Youth Meadowland Campus has been a member of the CCC Initiative since 2012. A great deal of progress has been made toward creating a culture of care. According to clinical director Chris Castillo, staff members are continuously looking for innovative ways to put trauma-informed care principles to work to improve the lives of the children and youth in its care. New programming includes calming gardens and a Hawaiian-style luau that promises a day of fun for residents and staff. Meadowland took advantage of CCC Year 2 funding to build a calming room in its cabin for middle school-aged boys.

Unfortunately, many of the cabins cannot accommodate a calming room, plus both staff members and residents expressed a desire to have calming spaces outside rather than inside the cabins. The idea of calming gardens was born!

Meadowland secured additional funding and recruited three groups of volunteers to create calming gardens for four of its six cabins. The calming gardens are located in shady areas close to cabins and are landscaped. Some have gliding benches, which are popular with the residents, and planter boxes will be added. The children take a hand in working with the volunteers. "We like to harness the energy of our volunteers to help us achieve our goals, plus the kids get excited when they see the volunteers," Castillo said.

The theme of the luau, scheduled for mid-June, is "Relax." Meadowland is located on 40 acres with many large Live Oak trees so part of the fun is unveiling six hammocks strung between trees in the shade. "It'll be another place the kids can go to relax and calm themselves," Castillo said.

