



# 2022-2023 Three-Credit Hour Course: Trauma Sensitive Schools

- ▶ **Audience:** *West Virginia Teachers/Educators, Counselors, School Nurses and Administrators*
- ▶ **Type:** *Self-Paced with Rolling Enrollment*
- ▶ **Enrollment:** *September 1, 2022 - April 14, 2023*
- ▶ **Duration:** *September 1, 2022 - May 19, 2023*

**Description:** As educators we need to be informed on the effects of trauma on physical and emotional health and how to support students who are living with traumatic experiences. In this course educators, staff, administrators, nurses, and counselors will investigate the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and their impacts on the classroom. Participants will consider how ACEs affect a student's academic performance and social-emotional relationships as well as how the educational community in a trauma-sensitive school can address and mitigate these effects. School personnel also need to assess how the stress of dealing with all of these problems has an effect on their own well-being.

## **Course Goals:**

- ▶ *Define the term ACEs.*
- ▶ *Discuss how adverse childhood experiences are affecting academic achievement in their classroom, school, and district.*
- ▶ *Identify possible long-term effects of childhood trauma on health, behavior, and academic achievement.*
- ▶ *Discuss attributes of a trauma-sensitive school.*
- ▶ *Assess the level of trauma-informed care in personal practice and/ or at the school or district level.*
- ▶ *Identify strategies for creating a trauma-sensitive classroom and/ or school such as forming positive relationships with students, families, and communities.*
- ▶ *Identify the trauma-sensitive team members.*
- ▶ *Define the roles of each team member.*
- ▶ *Identify core school operations involved in a successful trauma-sensitive school-wide team.*
- ▶ *Investigate the steps in moving your school toward becoming a trauma-sensitive school.*
- ▶ *Identify and develop an understanding of different types of trauma-informed strategies and classroom practices.*
- ▶ *Examine different age-level student ACE scenarios and recommend appropriate practices that would enable the student to be successful in the classroom setting.*
- ▶ *Define social emotional learning.*
- ▶ *Identify ways in which social emotional learning can foster resilience and provide supports for students who have experienced trauma.*
- ▶ *Evaluate and share free online resources such as lesson plans and activities to incorporate into daily instruction.*
- ▶ *Identify WV College and Career Readiness Dispositions and Standards for Student Success at various grade levels that, if taught and practiced with fidelity, could assist students in developing resilience skills to overcome trauma or stressful situations.*



- ▶ Discuss physical and emotional symptoms of secondary traumatic stress or compassion fatigue.
- ▶ Self-assess their level of fatigue.
- ▶ Develop a plan of self-care for prevention and/or assistance with compassion fatigue.

## Session Overviews

### ▶ Session 1 – Identifying Trauma

One of the largest and most prominent studies of adverse childhood experiences and their effects on life-long health was conducted from 1995 to 1997 by Kaiser Permanente through confidential surveys of members. Participants were asked to indicate if they had experienced any of the following adverse childhood experiences.

- Physical abuse
- Sexual abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Physical neglect
- Emotional neglect
- Mother treated violently
- Household substance abuse
- Household mental illness
- Parental separation or divorce
- Incarcerated household member

The study concluded that as the number of reported ACEs increased, so did the risk of negative health outcomes such as cancer, alcohol and drug use, depression, anxiety, and STDs. As research continues, the effects on the emotional well-being of children is ever-more alarming. Children who experience the trauma of adverse childhood experiences present symptoms such as a lack of concentration skills, anxiety, abrupt changes in behavior, eating disorders, self-harming behaviors, difficulty forming and maintaining appropriate relationships, and lack of impulse and emotional control.

### ▶ Session 2 - The End is Just the Beginning

In a trauma-sensitive school/ learning environment, educators, staff, administrators, nurses, counselors, coaches, and community members are prepared to recognize and respond to the effects of trauma on children. According to the Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative, a collaboration of Massachusetts Advocates for Children and Harvard Law School, core attributes of a trauma-sensitive school include the following.

- A shared understanding among all staff is present.
- The school supports all children to feel safe.
- The school addresses students' needs in a holistic way.
- The school explicitly connects students to the school community and provides multiple opportunities to practice newly developing skills.
- The school embraces teamwork and staff share responsibility for all students.
- Leadership and staff anticipate and adapt to ever-changing needs of students.

### ▶ Session 3 - Craft the Driving Question

Educators must be empowered to form dynamic, trauma-sensitive learning communities that will enable them to help all children feel safe and supported to learn throughout the school day. This requires a process in which leadership and staff identify priority needs for the students and families in their school and tailor trauma-informed solutions to meet those needs.



▶ **Session 4 – Using Trauma-Informed Practices to Respond to Real-World Situations**

*Educators must be empowered to form dynamic, trauma-sensitive learning communities that will enable them to help all children feel safe and supported to learn throughout the school day. This requires a process in which leadership and staff identify priority needs for the students and families in their school and tailor trauma-informed solutions to meet those needs.*

▶ **Session 5 – Social and Emotional Learning**

*Social-emotional learning (SEL) as defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) is “the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions; set and achieve positive goals; feel and show empathy for other; establish and maintain positive relationships; and make responsible decisions.” Children who have experienced trauma often demonstrate deficits in the areas of social and emotional competencies needed to persevere through traumatic or stressful events. Fostering resilience in students is an important piece of the educator’s role. A recent study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development supports that a “lack of SEL regularly correlated with unfavorable outcomes such as an increased chance of unemployment, divorce, poor health, criminal behavior and imprisonment.”*

▶ **Session 6 – Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care**

*Secondary traumatic stress is “the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about the firsthand trauma experiences of another.” (Peterson, 2018) Symptoms include:*

- *fatigue and physical complaints feeling powerless and hopeless about work,*
- *lack of concentration difficulty making decisions,*
- *withdrawal from people and situations,*
- *insomnia,*
- *increased anger, and*
- *irritability at home.*

*Strategies to prevent or address secondary traumatic stress include a healthy balance between work and home, being part of a network of support, self-awareness, diet and exercise, and mindfulness.*

## **Course Grades**

All grades in the course gradebook must be a checkmark for successful course completion. A checkmark indicates that all work has been completed and the work meets the expectations for that assignment. Quiz scores must meet the minimum expectations as stated in the course.

