



This info sheet is one of 12 two-pagers that highlights key findings and promising practices from the **Co-Creating Evidence (CCE)** study.

**Co-Creating Evidence** was an evaluation of eight different Canadian programs serving women at risk of having an infant with prenatal exposure to alcohol or other substances.

# Wraparound Programs and Trauma-informed Practice

**Being trauma-informed means that services integrate an understanding of women's past and current experiences of violence and trauma into all aspects of service delivery.**

In recognition of the high rates of trauma in women who have substance use problems, the goal of trauma-informed services is to avoid re-traumatizing survivors and to support safety, choice, and control in order to promote recovery and healing.

**In the CCE study, all 8 programs were guided by a number of theoretical approaches, including being trauma-informed, relationship-based, culturally-grounded, and harm-reducing.**

At all programs, women disclosed that they had experienced some form of violence, abuse and/or trauma, either historically or recently. Help for problematic substance use and/or trauma was the top theme of what clients hoped to get from participating in their program.

## Experiencing a trauma-informed service approach

In the study, the overwhelming majority of the 226 clients who completed the Client Questionnaire reported that they felt safe, that they trusted staff, and that their needs had been met by their program. These are all dimensions of trauma-informed practice.

### Safety

- 96%** feel physically safe at their program.
- 91%** feel emotionally safe at their program.
- 91%** feel safe talking with staff about substance use, violence or trauma.

### Respectful, Strengths-based

- 96%** believe staff recognize they have strengths as well as challenges.
- 94%** believe staff are sensitive when asking about difficult experiences.
- 94%** believe that the team really listens to what they have to say.

### Trustworthy

- 96%** trust the people who work at their program.
- 90%** trust that staff will do what they say they'll do.

### Choice & Client-directed

- 92%** believe that their program offers lots of choice about services.
- 91%** feel like they are a partner in deciding what services to receive and that staff listen to what they want to accomplish.



# Principles of trauma-informed practice

## Trauma Awareness

**Trauma awareness is the foundation for trauma-informed practice.** Being 'trauma aware' means understanding the high prevalence of trauma in society, the wide range of responses and adaptations that people make to cope with trauma, and how this may relate to clients (e.g., difficulty building relationships, anxiety, feeling like a 'bad' person).

- **Shifting from blame – “what’s wrong with you?” to understanding – “what happened to you?”**
- Many of the programs had training for staff in trauma-informed approaches, and several programs published resources or delivered training on trauma-informed care.

## Safety and Trustworthiness

**Physical, emotional, spiritual, and cultural safety are important to trauma-informed practice.** Safety is a necessary first step for building strong and trustworthy relationships and service engagement and healing. Developing safety requires an awareness of vicarious trauma, and self-care for all staff.

- **Safety and trustworthiness were built in the programs through being non-judgemental,** encouraging disclosure of substance use and discussion of harm reduction/recovery goals without fear of being reported, showing compassion, and providing opportunities for mothers and children to have visits when children had been removed.

## Choice, Collaboration and Connection

**Trauma-informed services encourage opportunities for working collaboratively.**

- Relationships (connection) are seen as the foundation through which change is made.
- **In these programs, clients can choose services for which they are ready,** and staff guide women in understanding these choices and having the confidence to act.

## Strengths-based and Skill Building

**A strengths-based approach to service delivery recognizes the abilities of trauma survivors.** Promoting coping skills can help people manage triggers related to past experiences of trauma and support healing and self-advocacy.

- Some programs offered groups focusing on trauma recovery and healing.
- **The programs provided opportunities for clients to build skills** in grounding, drumming, smudging, walking and other methods of self-calming and centering.

