

## ***Strive's* Trauma Informed Approach**

Many parents and children involved with the foster care system have had traumatic experiences in their past such as, abuse, neglect, violence or being separated from one's family. These experiences may continue to have an effect on parent's and children's thoughts and behavior throughout childhood and adulthood. The *Strive* curriculum and training was developed to incorporate an understanding of how these traumatic experiences may have an impact on parent's and children's behaviors so that Visit Navigators (VN) can draw on that understanding while supporting parents and children to have the best visits possible and minimize additional trauma.

Trauma informed care can be viewed as a framework of services and means of delivery that has an integrated understanding of how trauma affects people's lives, presentation and service needs. It is generally recognized that policies and service providers must address and respond to trauma appropriately to ensure the best outcomes for individuals and families using these services.

*Strive's* trauma-informed approach is guided by the trauma-informed framework of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) which is grounded in a set of four assumptions and six key principles which include (SAMHSA 2014):

- **Realization** at all levels of a program, organization or system about the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
  - **Recognition** of the signs of trauma in individuals involved with the system;
  - A program, organization or system **responds** by fully integrating a trauma-informed approach into policies, procedures and practices;
  - And actively **resists** re-traumatization.
- 1) **Safety** - *Strive* focuses on building a safe and supportive relationship between the parent and the *Strive* Visit Navigator (VN). The VN works with the parent to create a safe and nurturing visit environment for children and parents to have the best possible visits.
  - 2) **Trustworthiness and transparency** -*Strive* focuses on establishing trust and transparency. First, through the relationship with the VN there is an emphasis on building trust and mutual respect. The VN is transparent with the parent about the roles they play both as a mandated reporter and as someone who is there to help the parent be successful in their visits with their children. The VN demonstrates transparency by sharing with the parent what they will be communicating to the state child welfare administration about the parent's visit in the Parent Child Visit Report Form.
  - 3) **Peer support and mutual self-help** – The *Strive* curriculum incorporates the stories and experiences of other parents, including parents who have had their children removed, into the curriculum activities in an effort to normalize parents' experiences and give them hope and motivation.
  - 4) **Collaboration and mutuality** – *Strive* is a relationship focused intervention that focuses on building a supportive relationship between the parent and the VN and to every extent possible promotes power sharing between the parent and the VN. The parent is supported to draw on their experiences and wishes and frame how they engage in each activity in

terms of their specific needs and interests. The curriculum also provides a vehicle for the birth parents to share and exchange info with the caregiver about the child.

- 5) **Empowerment, voice, and choice** – *Strive* uses a strengths-based approach with the parent. The parent is given a choice about participating in *Strive* and if they do choose to participate in *Strive* activities, the parent is seen and treated as the driver. The VN recognizes and supports that parent’s strengths and successes in participating in *Strive* activities and in their interactions with their children. In particular, the VN gives the parent strengths-based feedback on the positive things they observed the parent doing during the visit with their child.
- 6) **Cultural, historical, and gender issues** – The *Strive* VN is trained in cultural humility. The *Strive* VN supports the parent by seeking input and incorporating approaches to activities that are tailored to be comfortable for and consistent with the parent’s particular cultural or gender context. The *Strive* VN also honors the parent’s family “culture” by showing empathy and providing support to the parent as they deal with feelings that may emerge when they encounter their child who, as a result of their placement, may be dressed, smell or look different.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014. Retrieved from: <https://store.samhsa.gov/shin/content//SMA14-4884/SMA14-4884.pdf>