



## **HHR Policy on Providing Trauma-Informed Care to Survivors of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking**

Domestic violence and sexual assault are significant contributors to family homelessness and serve as both a cause and an outcome of housing instability. Trauma-informed care in homeless service settings recognizes and responds to clients' previous trauma, approaches clients through a strengths-based lens, and provides clients with safety, respect, and choice.

Heading Home Ramsey has adopted this policy and commits its members and providers to provide trauma-informed care to survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Members and partners should employ trauma-informed care and ensure their organization does the following:

### **Trauma Awareness**

Trauma-informed service providers incorporate an understanding of trauma into their work. This may include staff training, consultation, and supervision. Trauma awareness also includes an understanding of the vulnerability of staff to secondary traumatic stress, or the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about and copes with the effects of others' trauma. Trauma awareness in homeless services may include:

- Staff training and supervision on trauma-informed practices
- Education on signs of secondary traumatic stress and staff check-ins
- Organizational emphasis and support of self-care activities such as exercise, sufficient sleep, taking time away, and spending time with family and friends

### **Safety**

Trauma survivors often feel unsafe and may actually be in danger (e.g., victims of domestic violence). Trauma-informed care works towards building physical and emotional safety for clients and providers. Trauma-informed service providers incorporate an understanding of trauma into their work. This may include staff training, consultation, and supervision. Trauma awareness also includes an understanding of the vulnerability of staff to secondary traumatic stress, or the emotional duress that results when an individual hears about and copes with the effects of others' trauma. Trauma awareness in homeless services may include:

- Staff training and supervision on trauma-informed practices
- Education on signs of secondary traumatic stress and staff check-ins
- Organizational emphasis and support of self-care activities such as exercise, sufficient sleep, taking time away, and spending time with family and friends
- Safety or crisis intervention plans for traumatized clients
- Safe places for children to play
- Security cameras and staff monitoring in shelter settings
- Ability to lock restroom and shower doors in shelter settings
- Sensitivity to emotional safety
- Support for staff with the prevention and treatment of secondary trauma

### **Respect**

On top of significant material losses, people who are homeless often experience a loss of dignity and are stigmatized. It is therefore crucial for homeless service professionals to treat individuals and families who are homeless with respect. Respect in homeless services may include:

- Ensuring culturally competent policies are in place
- Providing staff education on trauma
- Using clients preferred names
- Allowing clients to identify as their chosen gender
- Telling clients how their confidential information will be used and shared
- Involving clients input in improving programs and policies

### **Control & Choice**

Because control is often taken away in traumatic situations, and because homelessness itself is disempowering, trauma-informed homeless services emphasize the importance of choice for clients while also building environments that allow clients to rebuild a sense of efficacy and personal control over their lives. Giving control and choice to clients in homeless services may include:

- Clients in crisis have options and choices in where they are housed
- Staff behavior is consistent and predictable
- Clients have opportunities to choose among different provider referrals
- Clients have opportunities to choose among food options in shelter settings
- Clients are given a locked space to store personal belongings in shelter settings
- Clients' self-efficacy is supported
- Clients are given safe, anonymous outlets for staffing and program feedback
- Clients have input on rules and guidelines in shelter settings and rigid rules such as curfews and schedules are avoided

### **Strengths-Based Approach**

Trauma-informed care is strengths-based rather than deficit-oriented. Trauma-informed service settings focus on the future and utilize skills building to develop resiliency. A strengths-based approach in homeless services may include:

- Clients are asked about strengths in assessments
- Goals and objectives are focused on maximizing strengths when addressing challenges
- Resilience factors, such as positive family environments, support networks, intellectual capacity, connection with the community or aspirations for the future, are identified and maximized
- Skills-building services are offered
- Clients are asked for input in program planning and delivery