Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change Toolkit

Executive Summary

The Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change Toolkit offers an action plan for implementing trauma-responsive practices to help address each agency's unique priorities using this Theory of Change.
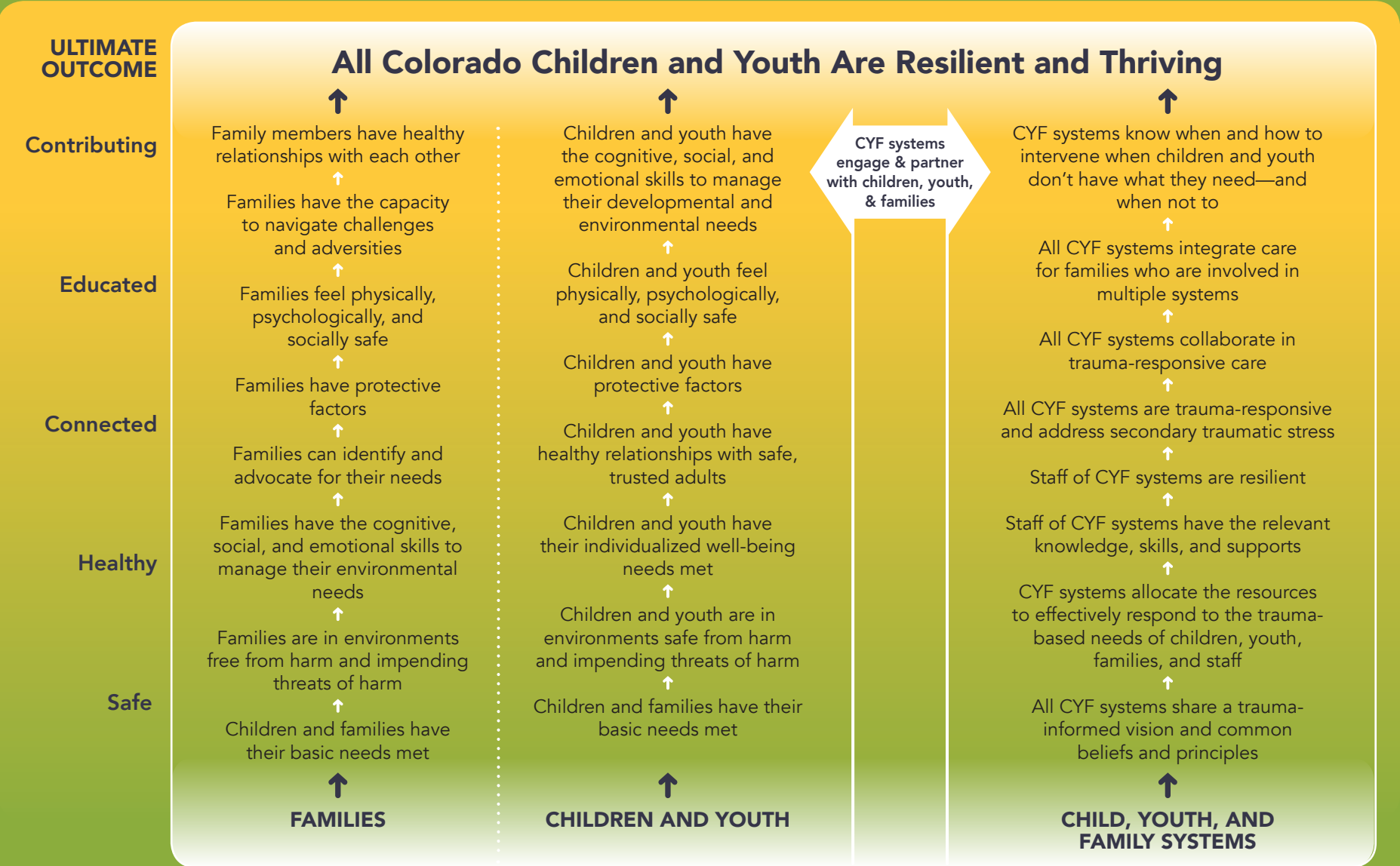
The Toolkit is applicable to any agency or system that serves children, youth, and families, including behavioral health, child welfare, juvenile justice, courts, medicine, early childhood, and various non-profit organizations. A separate school-specific Toolkit is also available. The Toolkit contains guidance and recommendations based on the current research and the real-world experiences of agency leaders, staff, families, and communities. The Toolkit is intended to integrate trauma-responsive approaches with other initiatives, procedures, and daily activities in the child-, youth-, and family-serving systems. To best support all children, youth, and families, trauma-responsive care must become integrated into all the activities of the agency. Trauma-responsive care is a comprehensive approach to being responsive to the needs and strengths of all children, youth, and families, and to achieving the goal of all Colorado children and youth being resilient and thriving.
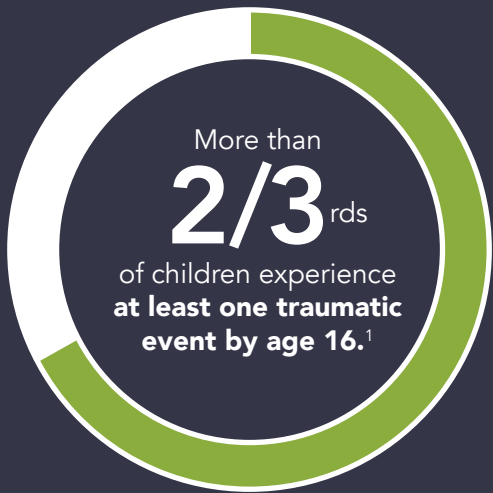

Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change

	FAMILIES	CHILDREN AND YOUTH	CYF systems engage & partner with children, youth, & families	CHILD, YOUTH, AND FAMILY SYSTEMS
ULTIMATE OUTCOME	**All Colorado Children and Youth Are Resilient and Thriving**			
Contributing	Family members have healthy relationships with each other	Children and youth have the cognitive, social, and emotional skills to manage their developmental and environmental needs		CYF systems know when and how to intervene when children and youth don't have what they need—and when not to
	Families have the capacity to navigate challenges and adversities			All CYF systems integrate care for families who are involved in multiple systems
Educated	Families feel physically, psychologically, and socially safe	Children and youth feel physically, psychologically, and socially safe		All CYF systems collaborate in trauma-responsive care
	Families have protective factors	Children and youth have protective factors		All CYF systems are trauma-responsive and address secondary traumatic stress
Connected	Families can identify and advocate for their needs	Children and youth have healthy relationships with safe, trusted adults		Staff of CYF systems are resilient
	Families have the cognitive, social, and emotional skills to manage their environmental needs	Children and youth have their individualized well-being needs met		Staff of CYF systems have the relevant knowledge, skills, and supports
Healthy	Families are in environments free from harm and impending threats of harm	Children and youth are in environments safe from harm and impending threats of harm		CYF systems allocate the resources to effectively respond to the trauma-based needs of children, youth, families, and staff
Safe	Children and families have their basic needs met	Children and families have their basic needs met		All CYF systems share a trauma-informed vision and common beliefs and principles

FOUNDATIONAL: • Sufficient resources exist in the community • Communities are trauma-informed

Top section

More than **2/3**rds of children experience **at least one traumatic event by age 16.**[1]

Exposure to trauma can lead to **toxic stress**, which **inhibits brain development**,[2] which in turn impacts children's **learning**, **mental health**, **behavior**, and **physical health**.[1]

Long-term, Colorado data show that adults who have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences, such as maltreatment and exposure to violence, are at increased risk of a wide range of serious **behavioral and physical health problems** as well as **lower educational attainment**.[3]

Theory of Change Principles: The Essential Elements of Trauma-Informed Care

1. Maximize physical and psychological safety for children and families.
2. Identify and respond to the individualized needs and strengths of children and families who have experienced trauma.
3. Enhance child well-being and resilience.
4. Enhance family well-being and resilience.
5. Enhance the well-being and resilience of those living in the community and those working in the system, including supporting self-care for providers and addressing secondary traumatic stress.
6. Partner with youth and families, including utilizing peer/family voice at all levels from policy to practice.
7. Support and promote positive and stable relationships in the life of the child and the family.
8. Recognize and respond to gender, cultural, and historical issues.
9. Promote equity by ensuring all families have equal access to resources and equal opportunities for respectful, meaningful engagement in services and supports in the community.
10. Integrate emergency management and crisis response.
11. Collaborate across systems and establish community partnerships.

Based on the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN)
Seven Essential Elements in Child Welfare Toolkit and Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed School System

Children exposed to trauma have an increased likelihood of interacting with multiple systems,

including behavioral health, child welfare, and juvenile justice.[1] Using a trauma-responsive approach in each of these systems has benefits for child, youth, and family outcomes. It also improves clients' satisfaction with the services they receive. Furthermore, a trauma-responsive approach can help professionals have better relationships with the children, youth, and families with whom they are working; improve staff confidence and satisfaction; and even improve their own well-being.[4] A trauma-responsive approach has benefits not only for those children who have been exposed to traumatic events, but also for those who have not; these approaches are best practice for all children and youth and should be incorporated as universal practices.

[1] National Child Traumatic Stress Network (2015). Understanding Child Trauma. https://www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma/understanding-child-trauma

[2] Shonkoff, J. P., Garner, A. S., Siegel, B. S., Dobbins, M. I., Earls, M. F., McGuinn, L., ... & Committee on Early Childhood, Adoption, and Dependent Care. (2012). The lifelong effects of early childhood adversity and toxic stress. Pediatrics, 129(1), e232-e246.

[3] Watamura, S.E., & Brown, S.M. (2017). Parental history of adversity and child well-being: Insights from Colorado. Colorado Office of Early Childhood.

[4] Hepburn, S. (2017). Quantitative Benefits of Trauma-Informed Care. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors.

COACT Colorado

COACT Colorado, Colorado's Trauma-Informed System of Care, is an initiative of the Office of Behavioral Health in the Colorado Department of Human Services and is federally sponsored by a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Under the leadership of COACT Colorado, the Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change was developed by a large team of stakeholders including state agencies as well as leaders and staff from multiple systems including behavioral health, child welfare, juvenile justice, medicine, education, and early childhood.

The Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change Toolkit is a partnership of Dr. Ashley Brock-Baca of the Office of Behavioral Health and Dr. Angèle Fauchier and Dr. Evelín Gómez of the Trauma Informed Practice team at the Kempe Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse and Neglect, guided by an advisory council of representatives of 17 different state and local agencies. The Toolkit is designed to guide users to develop a plan and/or organize efforts to meet evidence-based practice standards in creating trauma-responsive systems. The Toolkit aims to integrate knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices, as well as to avoid re-traumatization. The Toolkit provides an action-oriented guide for all systems in the community that serve children, youth, and families to apply the Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change.

The Statewide Trauma-Responsive Theory of Change is based on three features:

1) preconditions that are necessary to achieve trauma-responsive systems,

2) indicators to assess the status of each precondition, and

3) interventions to achieve each precondition.

The Toolkit aims to describe each precondition, offer approaches to assessing indicators, and provide guidance on approaches to intervention.

The Toolkit Moves Progressively Through Six Phases, Which Build on Each Other:

1. Supportive Context
2. Child, Youth, & Family Needs
3. Helpers' Skills at Helping Others & Themselves
4. Knowing How & When to Help
5. Connection
6. Resilient & Thriving