

TRAUMA IN THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY:

WHAT PRACTITIONERS SHOULD KNOW IN THE WAKE OF ORLANDO SHOOTINGS

Trauma in the LGBTQ community—nationwide—will as result from the recent Orlando shootings.

Many LGBTQ (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and/or Questioning) individuals experience more than one hate crime in their life; often, they experience many. They may have also experienced a range of life experiences that contribute to a traumatic response, or even posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The Orlando shootings can retraumatize LGBTQ individuals with trauma histories—whether they were directly involved or not. These individuals feel as if there are few ‘safe’ spaces to feel accepted and open, Pulse was one such place. To witness — personally or from afar — that safety shattered can be traumatizing.

What to Know Five Principles of Trauma-Informed Care

1. Safety
2. Trust
3. Collaboration
4. Choice
5. Empowerment

Trauma is Common

59% of men and women experience at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE) in their life and nine percent experience five or more ACEs.

Types of trauma include:

- Witnessing someone being badly injured or killed (35.6% of men and 14.5% of women)
- Being involved in a fire, flood or other natural disaster (18.9% of men and 15.2% of women)
- A life-threatening accident/assault (25% of men and 13.8% of women)

Nearly half (48%) of young people have encountered at least one of nine types of adverse experiences, including physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, deprivation, addictions and exposure to violence.

Trauma Has Impact

Trauma’s impact is very broad and touches many life areas. It can impact a person across many parts of life: health, behavioral health, family, work, school and more.

Societal and Economic Impact

- The cost of untreated trauma-related alcohol and drug abuse was \$161 billion in 2000 alone.
- Children with trauma experiences are 2½ times more likely to have to repeat a grade in school.
- Without good resiliency skills young people often struggle to engage at school.

Physical Health Impact

- Children with histories of traumatic experiences are twice as likely to have chronic health conditions.
- Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects 2-5% of the general population and is one of the most common and least recognized anxiety disorders in primary care.
- Women with PTSD symptoms have a two-fold increased risk for type 2 diabetes.

- Women with four or more PTSD symptoms had 60% higher rates of cardiovascular disease, while women without PTSD symptoms who reported traumatic events had 45% higher rates of cardiovascular disease. Almost half relate to unhealthy behaviors, like smoking, obesity, lack of exercise and medical factors such as high blood pressure.
- DNA in people with PTSD shows increased levels of a gene that made them more vulnerable to multiple types of sicknesses.
- Multiple traumatic events in childhood relate to a 10-point difference in systolic blood pressure.

Behavioral Health Impact

- Up to 90% of people who receive public mental health care have been exposed to trauma.
- 43-80% of people in psychiatric hospitals have experienced physical or sexual abuse.
- Two-thirds of adults in addiction treatment experienced child abuse and neglect.
- Seventy percent of teens in addiction treatment have history of trauma exposure.

What to Look For

Possible indicators:

- Rapid heart rate and breathing
- Strong emotions
- Cringing, flinching, pulling away
- Exaggerated startle response
- Staring vacantly
- Unable to understand instructions

What to Do

Tips for Providing Trauma-Informed Care

- Screen for trauma histories, but only after your staff are trained and know how to respond.
- Meet with your patients before they disrobe.
- Ask permission before touching your patient.
- Explain your rationale for all procedures.
- Deliver sensitive information after your patients have dressed again.
- Share control with your patient.
- Ask if there is anything you could do to make a procedure easier for your patient and/or ask how you can help your patient relax.
- Pay attention to bodily cues.

Where to Go for More Information

Trauma Informed Care (National Council for Behavioral Health)

Cornerstones of Responding to Trauma in the LGBT Community (National Council for Behavioral Health)

Pediatric Medical Traumatic Stress: A Comprehensive Guide

(National Child Traumatic Stress Network)

Self-Care for Providers (Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress)

Sexual Trauma: Information for Women's Medical Providers

(U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs)

Handbook on Sensitive Practice for Health Care

Practitioners (National Clearinghouse on Family Violence)



www.TheNationalCouncil.org