Trauma-Sensitive Schools
TRAINING PACKAGE

UNDERSTAND • BUILD • LEAD

Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools
Action Guide

National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments

Safe Supportive Learning
Engagement | Safety | Environment

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Building trauma-sensitive schools involves changes to school policy, practice, and culture and requires ongoing efforts to ensure that all students—including students affected by trauma—are experiencing social, emotional, and educational success. As school and district leaders, you play a crucial role in bringing about change. Developing and sharing a vision of trauma sensitivity and the process for achieving it will help to overcome challenges by charting a course of action and maintaining focus and commitment among participants.

This action guide is intended to be used in conjunction with and after viewing the *Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module, to provide school leadership with a roadmap and tools for implementing a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide, including recommendations for using various components of the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package*. This guide introduces a multi-phased process for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach (see Figure 1). Each phase includes key objectives, activities, resources, and an action planning template. By using the tools and resources provided, your school will develop and implement custom plans for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide.

Please note that if multiple schools across a district are using this guide, school and district administrators will need to coordinate efforts and share strategies and lessons learned as each school develops and implements its action plans. This process is not intended to replace, but to supplement, existing frameworks or curricula that your school already may be using.

Figure 1. Multi-Phased Process for Adopting a Trauma-Sensitive Approach
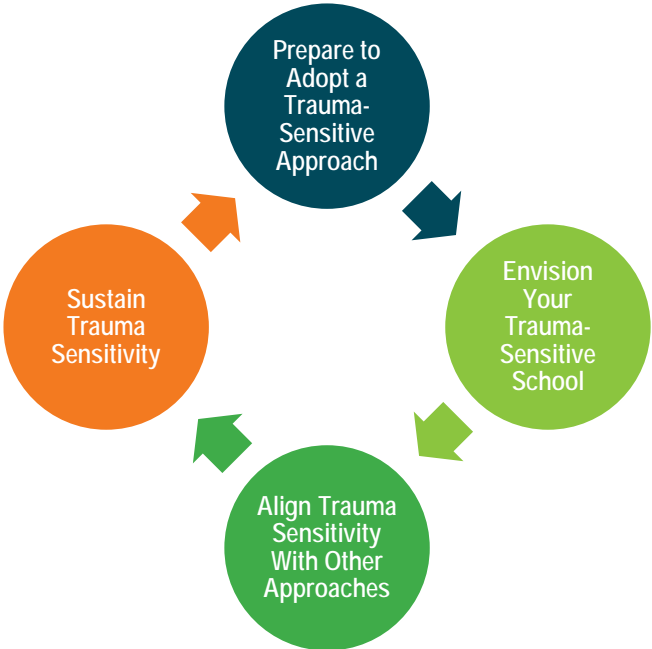
Preparing to Use This Guide

This action guide is designed for school leadership and others invested in leading whole school efforts to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach. This guide corresponds to the *Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module*, and it is recommended that school leaders review this guide in conjunction with the online module. It is useful for administrators to review this action guide with other colleagues who are in a position to assist you in making decisions about how you might adopt a trauma-sensitive approach in your school (e.g., fellow administrators, department heads, student services personnel, members of other work groups leading aligning efforts such as school climate teams). If your school already has a work group or entity focused on trauma or related topics, this group may review the module and this guide. See the *Facilitation Guide* that accompanies the *Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module for recommendations about how to facilitate an in-person leader training using these materials.

The roadmap for change laid out in this guide can be applied to schools and districts at varied stages in the process of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. For example, Phase 1 of this guide outlines activities related to preparing your school to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach, including providing all staff with an overview of foundational concepts using the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource and *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module. If your school has already trained staff on trauma and trauma sensitivity, leadership teams can focus on other activities in Phase 1 related to assessing your school's readiness for change and expanding your team to create a multidisciplinary trauma-sensitive work group. If your school already has this infrastructure in place, you may choose to move directly to Phase 2 activities related to assessing current practice and developing concrete action plans for integrating trauma-sensitive practices across key domains of school operations.

In the course of modifying perspectives and behaviors to become trauma sensitive, you will likely cycle through the four phases more than once and perhaps concurrently at times, as the school itself refines its practices or as new issues arise. Please note, if you are not a school administrator, but you are in a position to introduce school leadership to trauma sensitivity, please refer to the *Implementation Guide* for recommendations on how and when to introduce training package components, including this action guide.

Timeframe

Adopting a trauma-sensitive approach requires ongoing, focused work over the course of the school year. You may begin this process at any time, but certain periods of time, such as the summer or early fall, may be optimal for developing and beginning to carry out plans related to staff training and setting goals for adopting trauma-sensitive practices. Please keep in mind that this is an ongoing process, and it can take several years to fully embed this approach.

PREPARE TO ADOPT A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE APPROACH

Effective preparation is essential for achieving true and lasting systems change related to trauma sensitivity. Preparing to successfully adopt a trauma-sensitive approach school- or districtwide involves educating fellow leaders, staff, families, and community partners to ensure a common understanding and rationale for change; assessing readiness for change; and establishing the structures for supporting, monitoring, and sustaining new practices. The time it takes for leaders to prepare their schools and districts to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach will vary based on degree of buy-in and readiness for change at all levels of the system (e.g., administrative commitment, staff motivation, current capacity of the school or district to adopt a new approach).

Questions to Consider

School leadership teams consider the following questions during Phase 1:

- What is our intention as it relates to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach?
- Are all staff on the same page in understanding trauma and trauma sensitivity?
- Do we have the infrastructure in place for supporting schoolwide adoption of trauma sensitivity (e.g., a multidisciplinary trauma-sensitive work group)?
- Are we ready to more fully adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?

Key Objectives and Sample Benchmarks of Success

Key objectives related to preparing your school to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach are included here, along with sample benchmarks of success.

Key Objectives	Sample Benchmark
Leaders have articulated a commitment to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Leaders have developed and implemented a communication plan for informing staff about plans for integrating a trauma-sensitive approach.
Resources have been allocated to support the adoption of a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Training to support change efforts has been built in to professional development plans for the school year.
All school staff members have a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff as well as what it means to be a trauma-sensitive school.	■ All school staff members have completed the Understanding Trauma and Its Impact e-resource and the Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module.
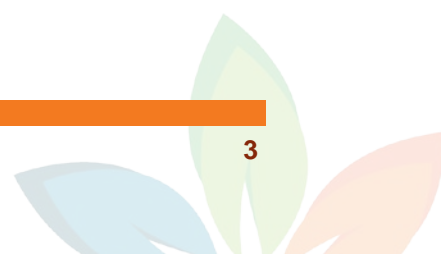
The school has a formal multidisciplinary trauma-sensitive work group that includes student and family voices and is supported by the leadership.	■ Personnel in different staff roles have joined the school's trauma-sensitive work group. ■ Students and their families participate in the trauma-sensitive work group.
The school is ready to more fully adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ School leaders have affirmed to staff their commitment to adopting trauma sensitivity schoolwide. ■ The majority of school staff expresses feeling motivated to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.

Activities

1. **Develop an action plan.**

   Use the action planning template for Phase 1 () to plan for how you will do the following:

   - Communicate your commitment to trauma-sensitivity
   - Allocate resources
   - Educate staff
   - Create a trauma-sensitive work group
   - Assess your school's readiness for change

   Once your action plan is complete, we recommend implementing the plan in the order outlined in activities 2 through 6 below. Consider how you may incorporate the guidance offered for each activity into your action plan.

2. **Communicate your commitment to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.**

   School leaders communicate to staff a commitment to adopting a schoolwide trauma-sensitive approach. You can accomplish this through a number of actions:

   - Introduce the topic as part of staff or team meetings and provide opportunities to discuss and illustrate what this might look like with staff.
   - Use the roadmap outlined in this action guide to provide staff with a vision for the change process at the school.
   - Attend and follow up on all in-person training events;
   - Ensure that staff members are able to engage fully in the change process (e.g., provide adequate time and resources); and
   - Model trauma sensitivity with students, families, and school staff.

3. **Allocate sufficient resources to support the change process.**

   Leaders can begin by considering how trauma sensitivity aligns with other initiatives already in place at your school. It may be possible to consolidate resources by incorporating trauma-

related trainings and activities into other processes that are already well resourced. Essential resources include the following:

- Access to computers for all staff to review online components
- Adequate time and coverage for work group staff to meet
- Time and coverage for ongoing professional development activities related to trauma sensitivity
- Materials for professional development events (e.g., photocopies of activities, discussion guides, accompanying slides; paper and markers for discussion)
- Time and mechanisms for evaluating impact
- Technology for conducting staff surveys and assessments (e.g., SurveyMonkey® or related platforms)
- Outside consultation and support around trauma sensitivity if needed

4. **Educate all staff about trauma and its effects as well as trauma-sensitive schools.**

Such education builds a common awareness and understanding of trauma and increases buy-in to the change process. Education includes everyone: administrators; teachers; paraprofessionals; student services staff such as school counselors, social workers and psychologists; nurses; office staff; bus drivers; food services staff; and maintenance workers. If staff are new to trauma concepts, we recommend that school leaders plan to introduce training package materials in the following sequence:

a. All staff receives access to view the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource independently via computer or tablet.

b. Leadership teams plan for follow-up training with staff using the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* companion slide deck and activity packet to support in-person training and discussion sessions to reinforce concepts covered in the e-resource. It is recommended that follow-up in-person training occurs to ensure that all staff are understanding core concepts and to gauge buy-in related to more fully addressing trauma across the school.

The *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* activity packet includes activities and discussion questions along with pre- and post-training knowledge surveys and a satisfaction survey. Leaders will need to determine which staff members are comfortable leading in-person training sessions on the e-resource material. With limited time for professional development, you may divide slide presentation and activities into multi-part training sessions and cover them during staff meetings or during other professional development events. This approach fosters ongoing dialogue and learning. If your school has already provided staff training on trauma, the leadership team may consider ways to use the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource and *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module to supplement existing training where appropriate.

If school leaders and trauma-sensitive work groups choose not to conduct an in-person training after staff reviews the *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource, you may choose to use the pre- and posttraining knowledge surveys in the activity packet before and after staff view the e-resource. School leaders may consider sending a pre-training knowledge survey to all staff via Survey Monkey prior to having staff view the e-resource and sending a posttraining knowledge survey once all staff have viewed the e-resource to assess for change.

c. Leaders conduct in-person staff trainings using the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module. The module familiarizes the staff with the concept of trauma sensitivity and with trauma-sensitive practices that can be employed schoolwide. The training is divided in to multiple sections, each with corresponding checklists, worksheets, practice guides, and discussion questions for supporting staff in adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. The module is best viewed in a group setting, with a lead trainer who can stop the group at various points to use the module handouts to foster staff discussion. The module can be viewed in segments for shorter professional development sessions.

Plans for educating staff should dictate clear timeframes for completing trainings and should offer opportunities for staff feedback about the material. Feedback will help you monitor completion and ascertain the level of buy-in for trauma sensitivity at your school. If live, group discussions with all staff are difficult to arrange, you could gather feedback by using surveys after staff view each resource. If discussions happen in person, it is important to establish a safe space where staff feel that they can be honest in their feedback. Questions for group discussions or staff survey can be short and simple:

- What was your general impression of the material?

- What was familiar to you?

- What was new for you?

- What surprised you?

- Was this information relevant to your interactions with students and families?

- How do you see trauma affecting students and staff?

- How interested are you in learning more?

Materials in the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package* are targeted to school staff, but leaders should consider how the different components of the package can be introduced to parents and community partners. For example, leaders may arrange for parent advisory groups and community mental health partners to view the e-resource and the *Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module. Leaders should gather feedback from these groups about the materials and communicate their intention to involve parents and community partners in the change process.

5. Create a trauma-sensitive work group.

The team of school leaders initiating the change process should grow and/or evolve after training to include staff members in different roles across the school (e.g., teachers, student services staff such as school counselors and school social workers, and other non-instructional staff) who are willing to support these efforts. If your school already has work groups dedicated to similar efforts, such as a school improvement or climate team, you can consider ways to align them in Phase 3 (p. 50). The work group is most effective when it represents the larger school community, which also means including students, families, and community partners. The work group plans for how to ensure all voices are represented in the expanded group. Over time, you may consider rotating staff members on the work group to avoid burnout and ensure new perspectives.

6. Assess your school's readiness for change.

The newly formed trauma-sensitive work group makes plans for assessing your school's readiness to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach and addressing any gaps in readiness. The work group can hold internal discussions using the Work Group Question Guide to Assess School Readiness for Change (p. 9). To obtain information from all staff members, the Staff Survey to Assess School Readiness for Change (p. 12) is a tool that is easy to distribute and from which responses are simple to tabulate.

RESOURCES FOR PHASE 1

The following resources for supporting Phase 1 activities and objectives are taken from the various components of the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package*, including this action guide:

- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact E-Resource
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact Companion Slide Presentation
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact Activity Packet
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools training module
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Facilitation Guide
- Work Group Question Guide to Assess School Readiness for Change, p. 9
- Staff Survey to Assess School Readiness for Change, p. 12

WORK GROUP QUESTION GUIDE TO ASSESS SCHOOL READINESS FOR CHANGE

The discussion questions on the following two pages will help your trauma-sensitive work group examine your school's level of readiness and identify potential readiness issues in three areas:

- **Motivation.** How motivated is the school community to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?
- **General Capacity.** How well is the school currently operating? Is there a strong foundation from which to build?
- **Intervention-Specific Capacity.** What specific capacities are needed to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach?

Instructions

1. Print copies as needed.

2. Assign a work group member to take notes during the discussion.

3. One person may facilitate the discussion while another takes notes. Alternatively, key points could be written on paper large enough that all can see during the discussion to ensure ideas are reflected accurately.

4. Discuss questions during one or more trauma work group meetings. Identify potential readiness issues related to motivation and capacity.

5. Save notes to use along with feedback from the staff survey about school readiness for change. This will inform your action plans for school readiness.

MOTIVATION QUESTIONS

Questions regarding the school community's motivation to implement a trauma-sensitive approach explore staff perceptions regarding the need to address trauma, the feasibility of implementation, and the difficulty of changing beliefs and practices concerning trauma. Low motivation indicates a need to learn more about potential barriers and challenges and reasons why staff members are not motivated to adopt a new approach.

If motivation is low, school leaders may consider spending more time educating staff about trauma and its impact as well as facilitating discussions with staff about the relevance of trauma to their work. Reasons for low buy-in may be less about the topic than about the current climate or culture of the school, in which case addressing issues related to general capacity may be a critical first step (see general capacity questions on p. 11).

Motivation
1. How is a trauma-sensitive approach different from what is currently in place universally to support students?
2. To what extent does trauma sensitivity add value to existing practices and approaches?
3. How consistent is trauma sensitivity with existing school values and cultural norms?
4. How compatible is a trauma-sensitive approach with other programs or approaches that have already been implemented at your school?
5. How difficult will it be to implement a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide?
6. How will outcomes related to trauma sensitivity be visible to staff members (for example, improved student behavior, more support for staff members, decrease in crises)?
7. To what extent is trauma sensitivity seen as a priority compared to other approaches being implemented?

GENERAL CAPACITY QUESTIONS

General capacity refers to different aspects of a school's current functioning, including staffing, leadership, and infrastructure. These aspects also account for organizational culture and climate. If the general operational capacity seems low, schools may need to focus on strengthening their capacity to operate effectively before implementing a new approach. This process may require adjustments to the current infrastructure to improve communication and staff support, transparency between administrators and other school staff within and outside of the school building, staff morale, and general skill-building efforts.

General Capacity
1. How well is the school currently operating?
2. How does the staff currently feel about their work environment?
3. How supportive is the leadership of approaches currently used by the school?
4. How receptive is school staff to change?
5. What structures are in place to support day-to-day school functioning (e.g., staff size and experience; opportunities for planning, training, and collaboration; communication channels)?
6. What are the general skills, expertise, and education of school staff members in various roles (e.g., administrators, teachers, student service, and support staff)?

Intervention-Specific Capacity Questions

To determine the school's readiness to adopt a new approach, consider the specific capacities necessary to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach. At this stage, leaders identify the plans they need to put in place to build the support, resources, knowledge, and skills needed to build and maintain a trauma-sensitive school.

Intervention-Specific Capacity
1. What knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed to become a trauma-sensitive school?
2. Who in the school will lead the process and champion trauma sensitivity?
3. To what extent is there strong, demonstrated administrative support for trauma sensitivity?
4. What additional processes or structures need to be in place to support this process?

STAFF SURVEY TO ASSESS SCHOOL READINESS FOR CHANGE

Rather than ask labor-intensive, open-ended questions, the staff survey presents a series of statements showing readiness and asks staff members to indicate the extent to which they agree with each one.

The school readiness survey is designed to be administered only after staff members have completed the Understanding Trauma and Its Impact e-resource and the Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools module. Once they have done so, respondents will be better prepared to assess their school's readiness to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.

At some point, work groups may consider adapting this survey to gather student and parent perspectives on your school's readiness for trauma sensitivity.
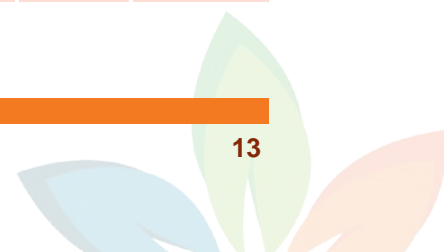
Instructions

1. Determine the method of administration. For example, you may print and distribute paper copies of the survey during a staff meeting, or you may use a simple online survey tool such as SurveyMonkey® which contains built-in mechanisms for tallying and reviewing results.

2. Provide staff with access to the survey, explain the reason you need their input, and give them a time limit for completion.

3. Compile the survey responses and combine the information with notes from the work group discussions to identify strengths related to motivation and capacity for change that the school can use in the effort to incorporate a trauma-sensitive approach. Use it also to pinpoint gaps and challenges for which you may need to develop additional action steps to ensure your school is ready to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.

    Note: The trauma-sensitive work group should ensure that all staff have access to survey results to help build buy-in and a shared understanding of the school's strengths and gaps related to readiness to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.

Staff Survey to Assess School Readiness for Change — Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: strongly disagree–4: strongly agree) the extent to which you agree with the following statements.				
Section 1	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. A trauma-sensitive approach is different from existing universal supports already in place for students at our school.	1	2	3	4
2. Trauma sensitivity would add significant value to existing practices and approaches at our school.	1	2	3	4
3. Trauma sensitivity is consistent with our school values and culture.	1	2	3	4
4. A trauma-sensitive approach is compatible (aligns well) with existing programs and approaches already being used at our school.	1	2	3	4
5. Adopting a trauma-sensitive approach would help us meet the needs of students and staff in our school community.	1	2	3	4
6. It is realistic and achievable for our school to implement trauma-sensitive practices schoolwide.	1	2	3	4
7. Positive outcomes from adopting a trauma-sensitive approach will be easily visible to staff.	1	2	3	4
8. Adopting a trauma-sensitive approach is a priority for our school.	1	2	3	4
Section 2	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. My school operates well in the day-to-day manner.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff receives the support they need in their varied positions.	1	2	3	4
3. Staff feels respected and valued.	1	2	3	4
4. Leadership supports existing interventions and approaches.	1	2	3	4
5. School staff is open to making changes and trying new things.	1	2	3	4
6. Staff receives adequate training to adopt new approaches.	1	2	3	4
7. Staff in different roles have opportunities to collaborate.	1	2	3	4
8. Communication across support, instructional, and leadership staff in my school is bidirectional, clear, and timely.	1	2	3	4
9. Staff has the general skills, expertise, and education needed to do their jobs.	1	2	3	4

Section 3	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Staff has the knowledge needed to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff has the skills needed to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
3. There are instructional and non-instructional staff who would champion this approach in our school.	1	2	3	4
4. Staff has clear support from leadership to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
5. Staff has enough resources to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
6. Our school has the systems and processes in place to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
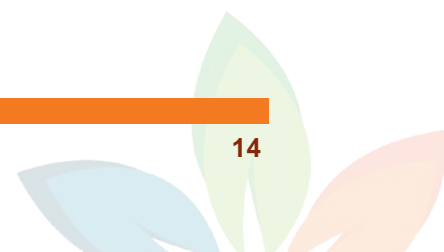
ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE FOR PHASE 1: PREPARE TO ADOPT A TRAUMA-SENSITIVE APPROACH

Use the action planning template for Phase 1 to plan for how you will prepare your school to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach. You may also adapt the key objectives provided here as needed and/or develop others that are relevant to your context. As appropriate, package resources for supporting key objectives are included in the template.

Key Objective	Action Steps	Timeframe	Lead/Team	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
Leaders have articulated a commitment to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.					
Resources have been allocated to support the adoption of a trauma-sensitive approach.					
All school staff members have a baseline understanding of trauma and its impact on students and staff and what it means to be a trauma-sensitive school.				Understanding Trauma and Its Impact e-resource, slide presentation and activity packet; Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module and Facilitation Guide	

Key Objective	Action Steps	Timeframe	Lead/Team	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
The school has a formal multidisciplinary trauma-sensitive work group that includes student and family voices and is supported by the leadership.					
The school is ready to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.				Work Group Question Guide to Assess School Readiness for Change; Staff Survey to Assess School Readiness for Change	

Phase 2

ENVISION YOUR TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL

Successful change starts with a vision for your trauma-sensitive school and then proceeds to developing a plan for making it a reality. To begin developing a vision, your school's trauma-sensitive work group first needs to understand what the key elements of a trauma-sensitive school are and to assess current practice as it relates to trauma sensitivity. In this action guide, we provide a framework that includes key elements of trauma sensitivity across six domains: (1) Support staff development; (2) Create safe and supportive environments; (3) Assess needs and provide supports; (4) Build social and emotional skills; (5) Collaborate with students and families; and (6) Adapt policies and procedures. Schools plan for how to integrate key elements of trauma sensitivity across these domains. Key elements of trauma-sensitivity are included to provide guidance to schools about what it means to adopt a whole school trauma-sensitive approach.

Questions to Consider

Trauma-sensitive work group members consider the following questions during Phase 2:

- What is our current capacity in schoolwide trauma sensitivity?
- Do we have a plan for how we want to proceed?
- Are we all in agreement with the plan and areas of focus?
- How are we monitoring progress and impact?

Key Objectives and Sample Benchmarks of Success

Key objectives related to envisioning your trauma-sensitive school are included here, along with sample benchmarks of success.

Key Objectives	Sample Benchmark
The school has an understanding of its current capacity related to trauma-sensitivity.	■ Work group has reviewed current practices across core domains of trauma sensitivity. ■ Staff have provided input on current practice related to trauma sensitivity. ■ Work group and staff have agreed on core focus areas for growth.
The school has a tailored plan in place for integrating trauma-sensitive practices across core domains.	■ Work group has a concrete plan with targeted action steps for integrating key elements of trauma sensitivity within and/or across six core domains. ■ Work group has communicated plan to staff.

Key Objectives	Sample Benchmark
There are processes in place for ensuring maintenance of the trauma-sensitive work group.	■ Work group meetings are held regularly to monitor progress towards goals and to make adjustments to plans as needed.
There is a plan in place for monitoring progress towards goals.	■ A formal process for monitoring progress towards goals is created (e.g., flowchart/timeline). ■ There is a feedback loop that includes staff, students, and families.
There is a plan in place for evaluating impact related to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Qualitative and quantitative measures of progress are identified.

Activities

1. ### Assess your school's current practices related to trauma sensitivity.

   The trauma-sensitive work group assesses your school's current practices as they relate to trauma sensitivity. The work group can hold internal discussions using the Work Group Discussion Questions for Assessing Current Practice (p. 22). Staff in different roles have different perspectives on school operations that may help identify areas of strength and opportunities for growth. To obtain information from all staff members, the Staff Survey for Assessing Current Practice (p. 25) is easy to distribute and tabulate.

2. ### Identify and document focus areas for action planning.

   Use the assessment results from the work group discussions and staff survey to determine areas for growth related to trauma sensitivity. You may decide to focus on one domain at a time or integrate particular key elements across multiple domains.

3. ### Develop an action plan for adopting key elements of traumasensitivity in each domain of focus (p. 35-49).

   Using the information derived from discussions and the current practices survey, complete the action plan template for the domains you select by entering the following: (1) action steps for achieving each key element; (2) agreed-upon timeframe to finish; (3) lead person or team responsible; (4) resources those responsible will use; and (5) measurable benchmarks that will indicate success.

4. ### Develop a feedback loop to keep all staff informed.

   By developing a process for keeping all school staff informed of work group activities and plans and for gathering feedback, you will enhance the motivation to adopt trauma-sensitive practices. A number of strategies are possible:
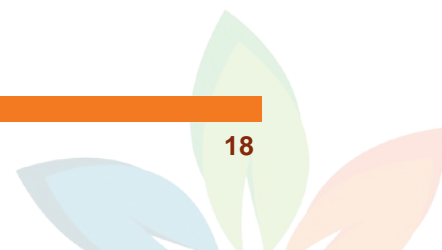
- Create an online workspace to facilitate sharing documents like the action plan and to show progress towards goals.
- Provide regular updates in staff meetings, leadership meetings, and all-staff e-mails or newsletters to encourage ongoing dialogue and exchange of ideas.
- Administer regular (quarterly or semiannual) staff surveys or focus groups to help assess the extent to which changes reach all staff and influence daily practice and whether aspects of the change process could be improved.

Be prepared to reconsider the plan in light of feedback. Staff feedback may necessitate adjustments to the action plan, including adding new goals and action steps.

Note: Use the action planning template (p. 48-49) to identify concrete steps for how you will develop and maintain a feedback loop.

5. Develop a plan for monitoring progress and impact.

Work groups should establish a regular meeting time and process for ongoing review of plan implementation and progress monitoring. Work group meetings may be aligned with existing structures and meetings to avoid duplication of efforts and staff fatigue (see Phase 3, p. 50).

Establishing processes at the outset for evaluating the impact of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach will let the work group know what is and is not working. Specific methods of collecting qualitative and quantitative data to assess change should be formally identified as part of a school's preparation for trauma sensitivity. Qualitative data may be collected through focus groups and interviews with staff, students, and families; observations of how things have changed; and case studies. Quantitative data is gathered via such sources as pre- and post-knowledge surveys, document reviews, and existing measures of student behavior, academic achievement, and school climate.

Note: Use the action planning template (p. 48-49), to identify concrete steps for how you will maintain the work group and evaluate impact.

6. Implement action plans.

Implement your action plan for trauma-sensitivity. Questions to consider while implementing include the following:

- What is/isn't working?
- What goals and action steps need to be adjusted or modified?
- What's missing that needs to be considered?

7. Revisit readiness.

As you develop and begin to implement your action plans, continue to identify potential challenges or barriers to change; keep them in mind while moving forward. At various times in your process, the work group may add action steps for reassessing readiness as a way to monitor receptivity to the change process. Work group members also may adjust initial readiness survey questions to reflect their progress. For example, rather than evaluating whether the school has what is needed to **begin** to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach, questions may focus on whether the school has what it needs to **sustain** capacity for trauma sensitivity.

RESOURCES FOR PHASE 2

The following resources for supporting Phase 2 are taken from the various components of the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package* and this action guide:

- Work Group Question Guide for Assessing Current Practice, p. 22
- Staff Survey to Assess Current Practice, p. 25
- Staff Development Planning Guide, p. 28
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact E-Resource
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact Companion Slide Presentation
- Understanding Trauma and Its Impact Activity Packet
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Facilitation Guide
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Handout Packet
- Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Individual Handouts:
    - Applying the Core Principles Worksheet
    - Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet
    - Mapping Triggers and Opportunities Activity
    - Navigating Crises Worksheet
    - Trauma-Informed Assessment and Planning Checklist
    - Guidelines for Adopting a Multi-Tiered Approach to Addressing Trauma
    - Social and Emotional Competencies Checklist
    - Strategies for Collaboration
    - Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures

[**Note:** The Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools module and handouts are particularly useful resources for supporting action planning during Phase 2. The work group should revisit the module and handouts for concrete examples of trauma-sensitive practices that may generate ideas for action planning in a particular area. The work group can also use the handouts to support ongoing professional development during meetings and training events as a way to reinforce concepts or take a deeper look at a particular topic area related to trauma sensitivity (e.g., crisis intervention, identifying triggers)].

WORK GROUP QUESTION GUIDE TO ASSESS CURRENT PRACTICE

The discussion questions will help your trauma work group examine your school's current practice related to trauma sensitivity across six domains. Use the guiding questions on the following two pages to facilitate work group discussions about areas of strength and growth.

Instructions

1. Print copies as needed.

2. Assign a work group member to take notes during the discussion.

3. One person may facilitate the discussion while another takes notes. Alternatively, you could write key points on paper large enough that all can see during the discussion to ensure ideas are reflected accurately.

4. Discuss questions during one or more trauma work group meetings.

5. Identify domains showing your school having strengths as well as domains suggesting areas for growth.

6. Save notes to use along with feedback from the comprehensive staff survey about current school practices that support trauma sensitivity. This process will help you designate areas of focus for action planning.

QUESTIONS BY DOMAIN

Support staff development

1. What type of training on trauma and trauma sensitivity does staff receive?
2. Who receives this type of training and how often is it provided?
3. How is staff knowledge assessed after training?
4. What topics are currently addressed?
5. What is the plan for staff turnover as it relates to trauma training?
6. How does the school support sustained understanding of trauma concepts and trauma-informed practice?
7. How are individual supervision and staff meetings informed by an understanding of trauma?
8. How does the school address secondary trauma among staff?
9. What processes are in place to support staff on an ongoing basis?
10. How is self-care being encouraged?

Create a safe and supportive environment

1. How does the school create a safe physical environment for staff, students, and families throughout the school building? Consider physical safety in the classroom and common areas.
2. How does the school create a welcoming physical atmosphere?
3. How does the school environment reflect the cultures of the students and families that make up the school community?
4. What are the school's policies concerning bullying and violence, and how are they enforced?
5. How does the school identify potential environmental triggers for students and families who have trauma histories?
6. How do school staff anticipate potential problems related to trauma?
7. How do staff consider trauma when responding to student crises?
8. How does the protocol for crisis intervention align with a trauma-sensitive approach?
9. How does the school convey respect for cultural differences?

Assess needs and provide support

1. How do school-based assessments take trauma into account?
2. How does an understanding of trauma inform the assessment process (e.g., where conducted, who conducts assessments, steps taken to ensure privacy and confidentiality)?
3. How does your school work with students and families to develop individual goals and plans?
4. How do school plans such as Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and behavioral plans take trauma into account?
5. What types of services does your school provide to address the needs of youth exposed to trauma, and who provides these services?
6. What types of connections does the school have with community-based providers who have expertise in trauma?

Build social and emotional skills

1. What formal strategies does the school use to build social and emotional skills (e.g., self-regulation, social skills, and coping strategies)?
2. What education does the school provide students and families about stress and its impact?
3. What strategies does the school employ to support students to cope with stress (e.g., verbal and nonverbal strategies)?

Collaborate with students and families

1. How are students and families given a voice to express concerns and ideas?
2. How does the school support student and family choice during interactions?
3. How do staff foster partnerships with students and families?
4. How do staff communicate with students and their families (for example, approach, tone, frequency, clarity)?
5. How are privacy and confidentiality upheld?
6. How is cultural awareness considered in relationship building?
7. How do staff consider the potential impact of trauma in how they conduct themselves during meetings and interactions with students and families?

Adapt policies and procedures

1. How do the school's policies and procedures align with a trauma-sensitive approach?
2. How do discipline, communication, and safety procedures reflect an understanding of trauma?
3. What is the process for reviewing policies and practices, and who is involved in this review?

STAFF SURVEY TO ASSESS CURRENT PRACTICE

Surveying the staff before and after you launch a program to establish a trauma-sensitive environment at your school provides measurable information about their perceptions as to the starting point and the amount of change brought about once the education in trauma sensitivity begins.

Instructions

1. Determine the method of administration. For example, you may print and distribute paper copies of the survey during a staff meeting, or you may use a simple online survey tool, such as SurveyMonkey®, which contains built-in mechanisms for tallying and reviewing results.

2. Provide staff with access to the survey, explain the reason you need their input, and give them a time limit for completion.

3. Compile the survey responses and combine the information with notes from the work group discussions to identify strengths and gaps related to trauma sensitivity to inform action planning. Results should be shared with all staff to ensure a collective understanding of current practice and possible areas for action planning.

Staff Survey for Assessing Current Practice Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: strongly disagree–4: strongly agree) the extent to which you agree with the following statements.				
1. Support staff development	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. All staff member receive training on different types of trauma and effects on students and staff.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff knowledge of trauma is assessed pre- and post-training.	1	2	3	4
3. Topics related to trauma are regularly addressed during professional development events.	1	2	3	4
4. The school supports ongoing learning related to trauma and trauma-sensitive practices.	1	2	3	4
5. School staff has a clear understanding of what it looks like to use a trauma-sensitive approach when working with students.	1	2	3	4
6. School staff has a clear understanding of what it looks like to use a trauma-sensitive approach when working with parents.	1	2	3	4
7. Discussions about trauma and trauma-sensitive practices are addressed in staff meetings.	1	2	3	4
8. The school addresses the effects of trauma on staff (e.g., secondary traumatic stress, vicarious trauma).	1	2	3	4

Staff Survey for Assessing Current Practice				
Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: strongly disagree–4: strongly agree) the extent to which you agree with the following statements.				
2. Create safe and supportive environments	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. The school's physical environment (e.g., classroom and common areas) is safe for staff, students, and families.	1	2	3	4
2. The school creates a welcoming physical space.	1	2	3	4
3. The school environment reflects the cultures of the students, families, and staff in the school community.	1	2	3	4
4. The school has policies around bullying and violence.	1	2	3	4
5. Antibullying and violence policies are consistently enforced.	1	2	3	4
6. The school minimizes potential trauma-related triggers (reminders) for students in the school environment.	1	2	3	4
7. Staff consider trauma and trauma-sensitive approaches when responding to student crises.	1	2	3	4
8. Staff interactions with students communicate respect (e.g., approach, tone).	1	2	3	4
9. Staff interactions with parents communicate respect (e.g., approach, tone).	1	2	3	4
10. The school conveys respect for cultural differences.	1	2	3	4
3. Assess needs and provide support	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. School-based assessments (e.g., psychosocial/behavioral) consider history of trauma.	1	2	3	4
2. Student assessments are conducted in a safe and respectful manner.	1	2	3	4
3. Students and families are active partners in setting goals for students.	1	2	3	4
4. Individual student plans (e.g., IEPs, behavioral plans) consider trauma and trauma-related needs.	1	2	3	4
5. The school provides or refers students to trauma-specific mental health services when needed.	1	2	3	4
4. Build social and emotional skills	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. The school incorporates formal strategies or curriculum for building social and emotional skills.	1	2	3	4
2. The school educates students about stress and its effects.	1	2	3	4
3. The school educates parents about stress and its effects.	1	2	3	4

Staff Survey for Assessing Current Practice Please rate on a scale of 1–4 (1: strongly disagree–4: strongly agree) the extent to which you agree with the following statements.				
4. School staff teach students strategies (verbal and nonverbal) for coping with stress.	1	2	3	4
5. Collaboration with students and families	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. Staff is aware of how exposure to trauma may influence relationships with students and parents.	1	2	3	4
2. Staff are aware of cultural backgrounds of students and families in the school community.	1	2	3	4
3. Staff supports student choice and control.	1	2	3	4
4. Staff supports parent choice and control.	1	2	3	4
5. Staff upholds student and family privacy and confidentially.	1	2	3	4
6. Students and families are given a voice to express concerns and ideas.	1	2	3	4
7. Staff demonstrate respect for cultural differences in their interactions with students and families.	1	2	3	4
8. Staff work to foster a sense of partnership with students and families.	1	2	3	4
9. Staff maintains regular two-way communication with parents about their child's learning.	1	2	3	4
6. Adapt policies and procedures	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**
1. School policies and procedures align with a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
2. Discipline practices are informed by an understanding of trauma and are designed to avoid causing additional harm.	1	2	3	4
3. School safety and emergency procedures are conducted using a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
4. Policies and procedures are reviewed regularly for their alignment with a trauma-sensitive approach.	1	2	3	4
5. School staff are involved in reviewing and developing policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4
6. Students are involved in reviewing and developing policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4
7. Parents are involved in reviewing and developing policies and procedures.	1	2	3	4

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PLANNING GUIDE

This Staff Development Planning Guide is designed to help school-based administrators and trauma-sensitive work groups consider what topics and processes to consider when developing an intentional professional development plan for supporting trauma-related capacity-building. A comprehensive professional development plan will cover multiple training topics and will provide specific information for each topic:

■ Topic title and brief description

■ Audience

■ Training delivery method and rationale for use

■ Intended **learning outcomes** that indicate participant mastery and/or application of new professional knowledge and skills

■ At least one measurable **benchmark** or indicator for each outcome

■ **Evaluation strategy** to assess intended outcomes and indicators, including data-collection instruments, data-analysis techniques, and reporting method

■ **Follow-up** as needed to support learning

■ **Resources to support** professional development activities

1. Topic title and description

Providing all members of the school staff with a basic education in trauma and its impact is an important first step in the process of becoming a trauma-sensitive school. The *Understanding Trauma and Its Impact* e-resource and the *Building Trauma-Sensitiv*e Schools training module support initial training efforts for all staff. Ongoing professional development builds on these initial training tools and provides additional information on trauma-related topics and helps staff develop skills associated with trauma sensitivity.

In some cases, professional development activities associated with trauma sensitivity align with activities supporting another approach, such as restorative practices or positive behavioral supports. Describing the topics will help you anticipate such alignments.

Trauma-Related Topics for All Staff
■ Child development and attachment and the effects of early adversity
■ The neurobiology of trauma
■ Particular types of trauma (e.g., historical trauma, racial trauma, complex trauma)
■ Experiences of particular groups of students (e.g., LGBTQ youth, youth of color, refugees)

- Relationship between culture and trauma (e.g., culture-specific experiences and responses)

- Secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma

- Child and adolescent mental health

- Resilience across development

- Core principles of trauma sensitivity

Skill Building for All Staff

- General trauma-sensitive practices

- Trauma-informed crisis intervention and de-escalation strategies

- Culturally responsive practices

- Strategies for engaging youth and families

- Strengths-based approaches to working with youth

- Self-care strategies

- Restorative practices

- Positive behavioral supports

- Mental health first aid

Specialized Topics

- Classroom strategies for promoting safety (teachers)

- Social and emotional competencies and curricula (teachers)

- Trauma-sensitive assessment and evaluation practices (student services staff)

- Evidence-based, trauma-specific mental health interventions for addressing trauma (student services staff)

2. Audience

Most topics will be useful for all staff, although some specialized topics specifically address the information needs of particular staff participants. Specifying the audience for each topic provides information for determining delivery method selection, choice of venue, and mechanism for announcing the activity. Even more important, knowing the audience helps the organizer or trainer focus and prepare each activity to meet any particular audience needs.

3. Training delivery method and rationale

Adults learn most effectively when they are actively engaged in the learning process, causing growth to occur at the individual level and helping change occur in the broader school environment. Real change calls for ongoing and varied training, incorporating opportunities for

staff to practice applying concepts and to give feedback. Potential training delivery methods include any of the following, each of which provides advantages and limitations that will contribute to your rationale for using it:

- **Large-group training** can be useful when providing initial staff and leader education about trauma and trauma sensitivity. Schoolwide trainings allow for all staff to receive the same information at the same time, to ensure a common understanding across roles and departments. Training may be done in person or by having all staff review the same web-based materials and offering times for follow-up discussion. Although helpful when starting out, one-time, large-group trainings are only a place to begin and should not be used exclusively. Staff retention of information is limited if concepts are not reinforced continuously.

- **Small-group training** allows for in-depth conversation and offers opportunities to apply knowledge to practice. Small-group sessions may be conducted for all staff in a particular role (e.g., teachers, student service staff, paraprofessionals) so that examples and discussions can be tailored. Small groups also may be multidisciplinary, to encourage cross-agency communication and opportunities to learn what staff face in different roles, as well as flexibility in applying trauma-related concepts. As with large-group trainings, training content must be reinforced daily to have long-term impact.

- **Team or staff meetings** already in place offer smaller settings in which to convey, clarify, and apply information on a regular basis. Small-group meetings are a forum for open communication, peer support, and additional training and education. These meetings may include regular staff meetings, in which particular trauma-related topics can be addressed or reinforced each time, and department or shift meetings, in which learning can be tailored to the specific needs of these staff.

- **Real-world application** provides opportunities to practice applying trauma-related concepts in everyday situations. To further large- or small-group trainings, school leaders may identify skills or strategies of focus for a particular time period, such as a *skill of the month* for all staff to practice—for example, using strengths-based language, identifying potential trauma triggers, and incorporating self-regulation strategies in the classroom. All staff members are charged with practicing a particular skill or considering a particular concept in their work. Staff or team meetings may be used for staff to report out on their experiences.

4. Learning outcomes and benchmarks

Staff development plans for supporting trauma sensitivity should include anticipated outcomes and measurable indicators of success. The components need to indicate who demonstrates each outcome and benchmark. Each benchmark also needs to be measurable and time limited. Data for deriving this information may come from the evaluation strategies you choose and may help determine your follow-up activities.

Sample Learning Outcomes	Benchmarks
Training participants will demonstrate an understanding of the neurobiological effects of trauma.	■ Pre- and posttraining surveys administered at the time of the session assess for knowledge change related to brain and body responses to stress and trauma. ■ Upon receiving the information, participants will be able to identify potential trauma-related responses by their students.
Training participants will be able to apply trauma-related concepts to their classroom practices.	■ During the session, teachers will identify specific strategies that they can use to reduce trauma-related triggers in the classroom environment.
Training participants will be able to identify the warning signs of secondary traumatic stress or vicarious trauma.	■ Within a week of the session, school staff will develop individualized self-care plans that incorporate helpful strategies for supporting health and wellness.

5. Evaluation strategy

Evaluating professional development activities involves collecting data about the activity that took place and about the level of participation. Information gathered may include staff perceptions about the activity and benchmark measurements that indicate whether the activity achieved the desired outcomes. Data gathered from professional development activities can be used as part of a school's larger efforts to evaluate the impact of trauma sensitivity on students, staff, and schools.

Evaluation Question	Data Collection
Did the professional development take place as planned?	■ Track individual staff participation via sign-in sheets. ■ Track whether the activity or activities occurred at the intended frequency or duration as planned using tools such as activity logs for tracking any follow-up. ■ Note any factors that altered original plans related to the professional development.
What were teachers' perceptions of the professional development?	■ Survey training participants on topics such as their understanding of the purpose of the professional development, the usefulness of the activity, and the support they received to engage in and apply learning.
Did the professional development achieve the intended outcomes?	■ Data collection is tailored to benchmarks indicating whether the professional development activity achieved your desired outcomes. For example, pre- and post-training surveys can assess knowledge change related to trauma and trauma sensitivity.
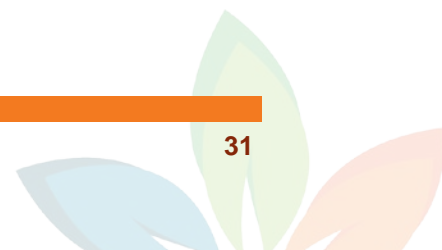
6. Follow-up

Depending on the topic, mastery may benefit from staff feedback, trainer assessment, or repetition or refresher activities. The needs of your staff will dictate the type of follow-up to offer. The following ideas are provided to stimulate your own ideas:

■ Provide opportunities for teachers to try out a new approach in the classroom and report back on results during team meetings.

■ Trainers can respectfully and unobtrusively observe or coach the staff on the job.

■ Designate a particular time period for staff to practice the same skill. For example, in a general meeting announce a strategy of the month related to trauma sensitivity, such as developing routines related to transition times.

7. Resources to support

Effective staff development requires adequate resources, including time, staffing, facilities and equipment, and funding. School administrators and trauma-sensitive work groups identify needed resources for each trauma-related professional development activity. With limited funding and time for professional development, as well as competing demands related to staff training, consider how trauma-related topics align with other topics that may be of interest in your school, such as restorative practices, school climate improvement, and positive behavioral supports. Combining professional development efforts maximizes resources and helps staff understand the integration between various approaches.

Staff Development Plan

For each training topic you choose to address, work groups may use this form to plan for the training event.

Topic title:	Date:
Description:	Lead: Team:
Audience:	Training delivery method: Rationale for use:
Learning outcomes:	Benchmarks:
Evaluation strategy:	Follow-up:
Resources for support:	

Action Steps	Person Responsible	Date for Completion
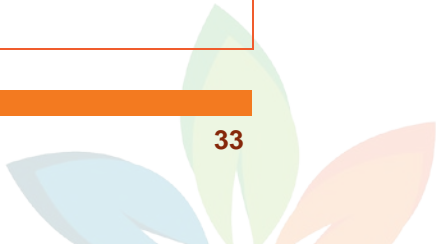
References

Maryland State Department of Education. (2008). *Maryland teacher professional development planning guide.* Baltimore, MD: Author. Retrieved from http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/share/pdf/MarylandTeacherProfessionalDevelopmentPlanningGuide.pdf

Haslam, M. B. (2008). *Maryland teacher professional development evaluation guide.* Retrieved from http://mdk12.msde.maryland.gov/share/pdf/MarylandTeacherProfessionalDevelopmentEvaluationGuide.pdf

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATES FOR PHASE 2: ENVISION YOUR TRAUMA-SENSITIVE SCHOOL

Action planning templates included here allow schools to plan for how to embed key elements of trauma sensitivity across six core domains:

1. Support staff development

2. Create safe and supportive environments

3. Assess needs and provide supports

4. Build social and emotional skills

5. Collaborate with students and families

6. Adapt policies and procedures.

[Note: This section also includes a template for planning around maintaining the trauma work group and monitoring progress and impact (p. 48).]

The work group may choose to focus your action planning in one domain or across multiple domains. For each domain, we include key elements of trauma sensitivity that a school may choose to adopt, sample benchmarks of success, resources from the training package that may be incorporated into your planning, and templates for creating a custom trauma-sensitive action plan for your school in that domain. Key elements in each domain are provided as guidelines to help further define the concept of trauma sensitivity. How a school adopts each element will vary and should be tailored to suit your context. For example, a key element of trauma sensitivity involves creating an emotionally safe and supportive environment but *how* schools do this will vary based on your context and needs. Work groups may also choose to adjust key elements as needed and identify new strategies to adopt schoolwide.

DOMAIN 1: SUPPORT STAFF DEVELOPMENT

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to supporting staff development. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 1 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmarks	Package Resources
☐ The school supports ongoing professional development in trauma and trauma sensitivity for all staff members.	■ Staff members receive ongoing training on trauma-related topics throughout the school year. ■ Trauma-related topics and strategies have been incorporated into staff meetings.	■ Staff Development Planning Guide (p. 28) ■ Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools Handout Packet
☐ The school assesses staff understanding and use of trauma-sensitive strategies.	■ Staff members demonstrate an understanding of trauma-related concepts. ■ Staff members have taken concrete, identifiable steps to alter practice in classroom settings and common spaces (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, playground) to support a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Understanding Trauma and Its Impact Companion Activity Packet (pre-post assessment of staff understanding of trauma)
☐ The school integrates expectations related to trauma sensitivity into job descriptions, performance review processes, staff and team meetings, and new hire practices.	■ Staff members view trauma sensitivity as a component of their job. ■ Staff meetings are conducted in ways that reflect the core principles of a trauma-sensitive approach.	
☐ The school supports staff resilience, including addressing the impact of secondary traumatic stress and vicarious trauma.	■ Staff members report feeling heard, valued, respected, and supported in their jobs. ■ Staff levels of professional satisfaction on formal measures are high. ■ Staff levels of burn out and secondary traumatic stress on formal measures are low.	■ Secondary Traumatic Stress and Self-Care Packet
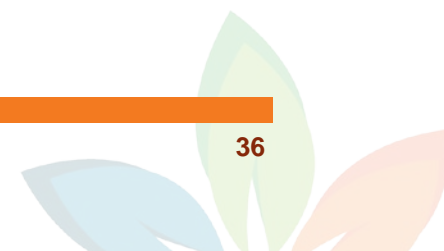
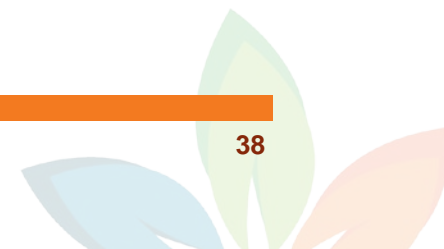## Action Plan: Support staff development

| Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
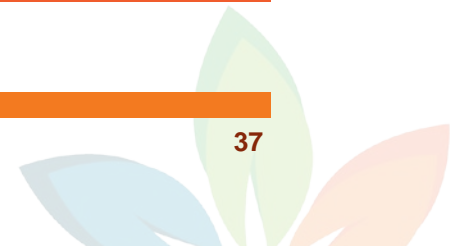
DOMAIN 2: CREATE SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to creating safe and supportive environments. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 2 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ The school creates a safe physical environment.	■ The school has a security system. ■ The school is clean and well maintained.	■ Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools module (includes sample strategies)
☐ The school creates an emotionally safe and supportive environment.	■ School staff consistently use positive, strengths-based approaches with students. ■ Students report feeling valued and respected by adults at the school.	■ Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools module (includes sample strategies)
☐ The school recognizes and reduces trauma-related triggers.	■ Staff can identify potential trauma-related triggers for students and parents. ■ The school has adopted specific strategies for reducing trauma-related triggers in classrooms and common areas.	■ Mapping Triggers and Opportunities Activity
☐ Crisis prevention and intervention practices are trauma sensitive.	■ Staff members use positive behavioral interventions with all students. ■ Staff consistently employ de-escalation strategies such as breathing exercises, grounding techniques, and calming spaces.	■ Navigating Crises Worksheet
☐ The school fosters awareness and respect for the cultural backgrounds and experiences of students, families, and staff.	■ Staff members and students demonstrate knowledge of the cultural backgrounds represented by the school community. ■ Artwork and curricula reflect the racial, ethnic, and cultural composition of the school community.	

Action Plan: Create Safe and Supportive Environments

| Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
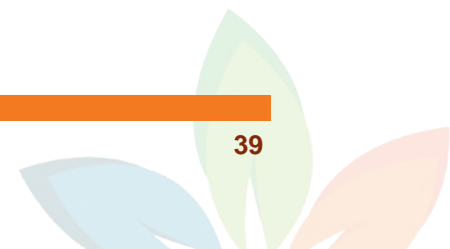
Domain 3: Assess Needs and Provide Support

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to assessing needs and providing supports. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 3 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ School assessments (e.g., educational, functional, behavioral, psychological) consider history of trauma and potential effects on learning, behavior, test results, and diagnosis.	■ Students' trauma-related symptoms are identified and addressed. ■ The possible effects of trauma on student performance are regularly discussed among relevant staff during meetings.	■ Trauma-Informed Assessment and Planning Checklist ■ Multitiered Approach to Trauma Guide for Student Services Staff
☐ Assessments are conducted in a trauma-sensitive manner.	■ Formal guidelines are in place for how to conduct assessments in a consistently trauma-sensitive manner. ■ Parent and student feedback gathered regarding the assessment experience is mainly positive.	■ Trauma-Informed Assessment and Planning Checklist ■ Multitiered Approach to Trauma Guide for Student Services Staff
☐ Student plans consider trauma and trauma-related needs.	■ Individualized plans include a place for addressing trauma-related issues such as triggers, necessary accommodations and helpful adult responses, and trauma-related supports.	■ Trauma-Informed Assessment and Planning Checklist ■ Multitiered Approach to Trauma Guide for Student Services Staff
☐ Students have access to trauma-specific clinical interventions—based in the school or community—as needed.	■ School-based mental health professionals provide evidence-based practices that address trauma-related symptoms.	■ Multitiered Approach to Trauma Guide for Student Services Staff

Action Plan: Assess Needs and Provide Supports

| Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
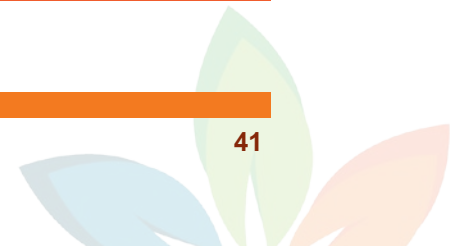
DOMAIN 4: BUILD SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to building social and emotional skills. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 4 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ The school integrates universal strategies for teaching and modeling social and emotional skills.	■ The school has adopted a formal curriculum for supporting social and emotional learning.	■ Social and Emotional Competencies Checklist
☐ Information about stress—including traumatic stress—and its effects is incorporated into curricula related to social and emotional learning.	■ Students demonstrate an understanding of stress and its effects.	■ Understanding Trauma and Its Impact e-resource, slide presentation, and activity packet
☐ The school has a formal curriculum for educating parents about stress and traumatic stress and its effects on children and youth.	■ Parents attend training sessions on stress and its effects.	■ Understanding Trauma and Its Impact e-resource, slide presentation, and activity packet
☐ The school integrates formal strategies for helping students cope with stress and traumatic stress (e.g., verbal and nonverbal techniques).	■ Classrooms use techniques such as breathing and mindfulness activities as part of daily routines.	■ Building Trauma-Sensitive Schools module (includes sample strategies)

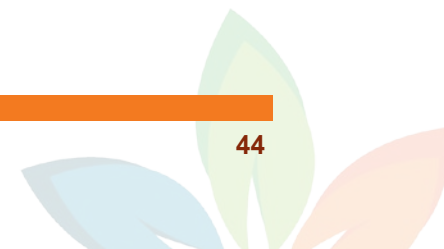## Action Plan: Build Social and Emotional Skills

Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
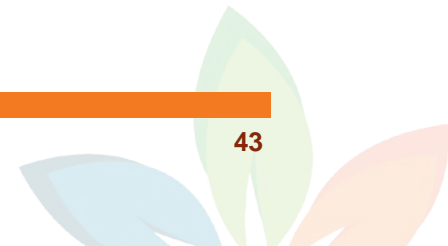
# DOMAIN 5: COLLABORATE WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to collaborating with students and families. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 5 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ The school has formal guidelines for engaging with families in a trauma-sensitive manner.	■ Family feedback about staff interactions is mainly positive.	■ Strategies for Collaboration rubric
☐ The school has a formal process for gathering student and family input into policies, practices, and service offerings.	■ Students can identify specific ways they are asked to give feedback about the school's policies and practices. ■ Parents have channels for providing regular feedback on school policies and practices.	
☐ Students and families are part of schoolwide efforts to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Parents and students are part of the trauma work group.	
☐ The school regularly assesses level of collaboration with families.	■ Degree of collaboration with families, as defined by the school, is high.	■ Strategies for Collaboration rubric

Action Plan: Collaborate with Students and Families

| Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
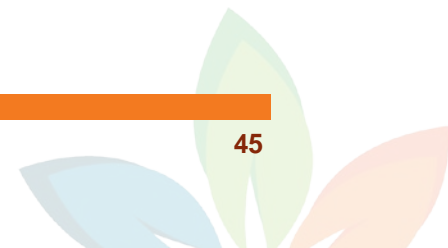
DOMAIN 6: ADAPT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The table below outlines key elements of a trauma-sensitive school related to adapting policies and procedures. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template for Domain 6 to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

| Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ School policies include a commitment to trauma sensitivity.	■ The school's mission incorporates language about trauma sensitivity. ■ School staff can articulate how trauma sensitivity is embedded in the mission and practice of the school.	■ Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures
☐ School discipline practices support a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ The school has adopted a restorative practices approach to discipline. ■ Classroom teachers facilitate restorative circles.	■ Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures
☐ Communication policies and procedures are trauma-sensitive.	■ Staff does not violate student privacy or confidentiality by speaking about personal issues in common spaces. ■ Issues related to student safety are addressed with families in clear, open, and respectful ways.	■ Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures
☐ School policies and procedures foster a sense of safety for students, families, and staff.	■ Students report feelings safe with adults at school. ■ There are clear procedures for staff to access support when they are feeling unsafe.	■ Guiding Questions for Policies and Procedures
☐ There is a process for regular review of policies and practices to ensure continued alignment with a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ The trauma work group reviews school policies yearly, with concrete feedback provided from school staff beyond the work group.	

Action Plan: Adapt Policies and Procedures

| Key Element	Action Steps	Lead/Team	Timeframe	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
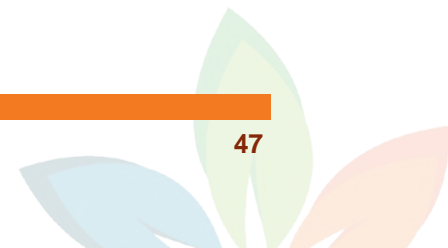
MAINTAINING PROGRESS AND MONITORING IMPACT

The table below outlines key elements for maintaining progress and monitoring the impact of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. Identify key elements that your team would like to adopt. You may also modify the key elements here as needed and/or identify others that are relevant to your context. Use the blank action plan template to create a plan for adopting your chosen elements.

Key Element	Sample Benchmark	Package Resources
☐ There is a process in place for ensuring maintenance of the trauma-sensitive work group.	■ Trauma-sensitive work group meetings are embedded into school structures and processes. ■ The trauma-sensitive work group meets regularly.	
☐ There is a plan in place for monitoring progress towards goals.	■ Work group members and staff are aware of the school's goals and action steps related to adopting trauma-sensitive practices. ■ The work group receives regular feedback from staff, students, and families about progress in adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. ■ Progress towards goals is documented quarterly.	
☐ There is a plan in place for evaluating impact related to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Qualitative and quantitative measures for assessing impact of trauma-sensitivity have been identified and formally documented. ■ Staff interviews and focus groups about efforts related to trauma sensitivity are routinely conducted.	
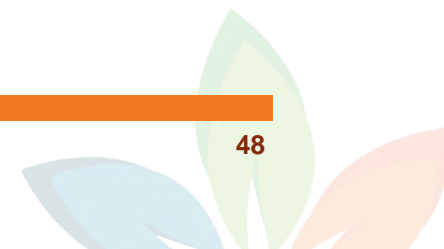
Action Plan: Maintaining Progress and Monitoring Impact

Key Objective	Action Steps	Timeframe	Lead/Team	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
There is a process in place for ensuring maintenance of the trauma-sensitive work group.					
There is a plan in place for monitoring progress towards goals.					
There is a plan in place for evaluating impact related to adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.					
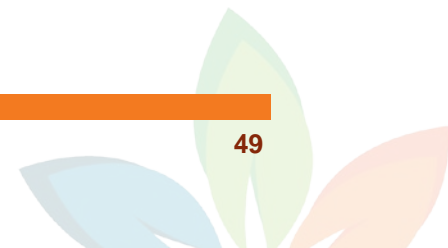
ALIGN TRAUMA SENSITIVITY WITH OTHER APPROACHES

Aligning trauma sensitivity with other universal, schoolwide initiatives maximizes resources and supports broader systems change and enhances sustainability. As the trauma-sensitive work group develops your plan for adopting a trauma-sensitive approach schoolwide in Phase 2, you should also consider how trauma sensitivity aligns with similar approaches that may already be in place within a multitiered system of support, including positive behavioral approaches such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), restorative practices, universal social and emotional learning programs, mental health promotion, and other initiatives for supporting a positive school climate. Rather than viewing trauma sensitivity as "one more thing," leaders could consider combining efforts to avoid duplication and to minimize issues of burden and intervention fatigue. Aligning trauma sensitivity with other approaches involves identifying commonalities among approaches, creating a joint vision, and coordinating implementation efforts.

Questions to Consider

Work groups consider the following questions during Phase 3:

- How does trauma-sensitivity align with other universal approaches used at our school?
- How can professional development opportunities be aligned across approaches?
- How can we embed trauma-sensitive practices into existing structures and processes (e.g., work groups, implementation and assessment tools)?

Key Objectives and Benchmarks for Success

Your work group can adapt the sample benchmarks and devise your own related to the specific actions you take to integrate key elements at your school.

Key Objectives	Sample Benchmark
The school has an established process for ensuring ongoing alignment between different work groups and implementation teams employing similar principles and goals to trauma sensitivity.	Complementary work groups and implementation teams meet regularly about activities and plans.
The school provides joint professional development activities related to trauma sensitivity and complementary approaches (e.g., restorative practices, PBIS).	Staff demonstrates an understanding of how similar approaches align.
The school has formally incorporated trauma-sensitive practices into other approaches that already include implementation and monitoring processes (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, school emergency planning).	Trauma-sensitive practices have been formally incorporated into the school's emergency plans.

Activities

1. **Develop and implement an action plan for aligning trauma sensitivity with other approaches.**

   Use the action planning template on to plan for how you will do the following:

   - **Align complementary work groups and teams.**

     The trauma-sensitive work group identifies other teams doing complementary work in your school, such as school climate teams, school emergency planning teams, PBIS teams, and restorative practices teams. The work group arranges a meeting with representatives from each team to discuss areas of alignment and strategies for coordinating efforts. Teams may continue to meet individually to address particular issues but communicate regularly about current activities and any overlapping efforts.

   - **Align professional development activities.**

     The work group should consider how to align professional development activities related to trauma sensitivity with other training efforts where there is overlap, such as activities related to restorative practices, positive school climate, or positive behavioral supports. Because the core principles of these types of approaches are similar and require similar cultural shifts, joint training sessions help staff to see the commonalities across approaches rather than as separate things to learn and implement. Similar skills-building efforts may be needed to support staff in making the cultural and behavioral shifts needed to adopt multiple approaches.

   - **Align implementation and monitoring processes.**

     Trauma-sensitive practices can be incorporated into existing implementation plans and fidelity checks for similar approaches to help make them sustainable. For example, trauma-sensitive practices and processes could be incorporated into checklists and fidelity tools for adopting PBIS to further embed trauma sensitivity into existing practice.

Consider revisiting the *Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools* online module for examples of how trauma sensitivity aligns with complimentary approaches, including PBIS, restorative practices, and school emergency planning efforts.

RESOURCES FOR PHASE 3

The following resources for supporting Phase 3 are taken from the various components of the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package* and this action guide:

- Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE FOR PHASE 3: ALIGN TRAUMA SENSITIVITY WITH OTHER APPROACHES

Use the action planning template for Phase 3 to create a formal plan for how you will align work groups, professional development activities, and implementation and monitoring processes. You may also adapt the key objectives provided here as needed and/or develop others that are relevant to your context.

Key Element	Action Steps	Timeframe	Lead/Team	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
The school has an established process for ensuring ongoing alignment between different work groups and implementation teams employing similar principles and goals to trauma sensitivity.				Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module	
The school provides joint professional development activities related to trauma sensitivity and complementary approaches (e.g., restorative practices, positive behavioral supports).				Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module	
The school has formally incorporated trauma-sensitive practices into other approaches that already include implementation and monitoring processes (e.g., PBIS, restorative practices, school emergency planning).				Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module	

Phase 4

SUSTAIN TRAUMA SENSITIVITY

The very actions leaders take to adopt a trauma-sensitive approach in Phases 1-3 are designed to support sustainability. Once plans have been established and new practices implemented, schools look to sustain and build upon these efforts to support trauma sensitivity across districts and communities. If your school has already embedded trauma-sensitive practices, your work group may be in a position to take your existing efforts around trauma sensitivity to the next level. If you are just beginning this work, consider how you can plan ahead for where you would like to go as you implement this new approach.

Questions to Consider

Work groups consider the following questions during Phase 4:

- What is/isn't working related to our trauma-sensitive action plans (schools consider what their data is saying related to impact of adopting this approach)?
- What goals and action steps need to be adjusted or modified?
- What's missing that needs to be considered?
- How do we sustain trauma-sensitive practices associated with positive outcomes?
- How do we educate others about our lessons learned/findings?
- What else can we do to support a trauma-sensitive approach within our school and beyond?

Key Objectives and Sample Benchmarks for Success

Your work group can adapt the sample benchmarks and devise your own related to the specific actions you take to integrate key elements at your school.

Key Objectives	Sample Benchmarks
The school identifies student, staff, and school-level outcomes associated with adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Staff members report increased satisfaction with their work after adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. ■ School climate survey scores have improved since adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.
The school updates its trauma-sensitive action plans based on data.	■ Plans are updated to reflect new goals and processes for maintaining achievements to date.
The school engages with others who are adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ The school participates in a quarterly community of practice with others in the district who are adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.
The school educates others in the community about trauma sensitivity and the effects of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.	■ Other community members are aware of the school's efforts concerning trauma sensitivity.

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Activities

1. ### Maintain the trauma-sensitive work group.

   Maintaining a formal trauma-sensitive work group is critical for sustaining trauma-sensitive systems change. This group keeps the focus on trauma sensitivity in the face of competing demands and staff turnover. The work group continues to engage the broader school community to maintain engagement and buy-in. New staff may be added to the work group over time to allow for new perspectives and input. Aligning or combining the trauma work group with other work groups or teams is another strategy for sustainability that is reviewed in more detail in Phase 3.

2. ### Evaluate impact.

   Gather and examine qualitative and quantitative data points identified in Phase 2 to assess for impact of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach. Use data to make decisions about next steps and any needed modifications to action plans.

3. ### Respond to changing needs.

   Schools reflect the trauma-related experiences and needs of the larger community. For example, a community may face a particular type of potentially traumatic event—perhaps a natural disaster or influx of refugee groups—or there may be growing unrest or violence that affects the student population. Trauma sensitivity may take new forms and require additional staff education and skills building to address these needs. For example, an influx of students with a different cultural background that is new for the school community requires coordinated staff training on the experiences, belief systems, and practices common to that specific group, particularly as those aspects relate to trauma exposure and strategies to support safety and healing. Greater awareness of the needs of particular subpopulations such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) youth may require adjustments to policies and procedures to minimize potentially traumatic experiences in the school environment (e.g., staff training, harassment policies, gay/straight alliances).

4. ### Review and update action plans.

   The work group is responsible for developing processes for ensuring that staff feedback informs goals and plans, keeping the school community informed of work group activities, and monitoring the implementation process. The work group reviews short-term and long-term goals regularly, reassesses strategic plans yearly, and adjusts goals as needed.

5. ### Build communities of practice.

   Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly. This type of collaboration allows people to share new ideas, lessons learned, and strategies for success. School leaders supporting a trauma-sensitive approach can benefit from networking with

other leaders and schools within and beyond their district that are also committed to becoming trauma-sensitive. Processes and learnings from individual school efforts can be taken to scale across other schools to support districtwide adoption.

Note: Use the action planning template on to identify concrete steps for how you will build or participate in a community of practice.

6. Educate others.

Educating community partners about trauma, trauma-sensitive practices, and outcomes related to trauma sensitivity can help schools maintain energy and focus. Bringing this awareness beyond the school grounds also supports further partnership with community members and other youth-serving systems. The work group may consider bringing trauma trainings conducted for staff, students, and families to the broader community; engaging in community forms or task forces focused on trauma; and educating other schools or districts about what you have done to create a trauma-sensitive school.

Note: Use the action planning template on p. 58 to identify concrete steps for how you will educate others about trauma and trauma sensitivity.

RESOURCES FOR PHASE 4

The following resources for supporting Phase 4 are taken from the various components of the *Trauma-Sensitive Schools Training Package* and this action guide:

- Leading Trauma-Sensitive Schools online module

ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE FOR PHASE 4: SUSTAIN TRAUMA SENSITIVITY

Use the action planning template for Phase 4 to plan for how you will sustain trauma sensitivity. You may also adapt the key objectives provided here as needed and/or develop others that are relevant to your context.

Key Objective	Action Steps	Timeframe	Lead/Team	Resources Have/Need	Benchmarks of Success
The school engages with others who are adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.					
The school educates others in the community about trauma sensitivity and the effects of adopting a trauma-sensitive approach.					
Other:					

Disclaimer

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Guarino, K. & Chagnon, E. (2018). *Trauma-sensitive schools training package*. Washington, DC: National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments.