

Module 6:

Providing Developmentally Appropriate Services: Neuroscience and Trauma-Informed Care

Objectives

1. To gain a greater understanding of brain development and functioning during emerging adulthood.
2. To gain knowledge of the neurobiology of traumatic stress.
3. To gain skills for basing services on individual needs and trauma informed care.
4. To engage young people who have had experiences of trauma in leadership and system change.

Scenario



Support Following Traumatic Experiences ~ Michele

Several weeks ago Michele (aged 18) was referred to the mental health agency where you work by her primary care provider because of severe anxiety and depression. Michele was assigned to you but despite two scheduled meetings, she has not shown up and you are preparing to call her to tell her that she will be dropped because of the no-shows. Today, Michele walks into your office tearful and upset and with visible bruises on her face. Michele reports that last night she left her live-in boyfriend after he pulled a gun and threatened to kill her during an argument. Michele ran away late at night after managing to calm him following the argument, and stayed overnight with a friend. Michele says her friend does not have room for her to stay more than a night or two. Michele tells you that she and her boyfriend have been drinking more lately and using marijuana on a daily basis. The boyfriend is unemployed and has been getting angrier recently and he has punched or kicked Michele and threatened to kill her several times over the last several months. She is scared of him and following the gun incident she is determined not to return.

Questions for "Michele" Scenario

After reading and thinking about the scenario above, how might you respond to the following questions:

1. What would you do first to make a safety plan with Michele?
 2. Who else would you contact?
 3. What steps would you take to assist Michele to recover from these traumatic events? What else would you do to support Michele?
 4. How did you consider Michele's level of brain development in your responses?
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Module 6 Questions

Here we offer questions to guide your examination of how module 6 content could be applied in your work with the young people you serve:

1. How do you incorporate brain development in your work with young people? Think of a situation where a young person was making a poor decision. What did you do help the young person consider the likely consequences and think it through in a different way?
2. What have you found to be effective ways to create a safe environment for youth and/or families who have experienced complex trauma? Describe an example of what you did and how the youth and/or families responded.
3. Telling their story to others can be traumatizing for many youth. How have you supported young people when telling their story as part of a self-advocacy effort or in advocacy on behalf of other youth? What were the challenges in doing this? What was most helpful to the youth?
4. Working with young people who have experienced trauma, particularly complex trauma, can lead to secondary or vicarious trauma in service providers. What self-care activities do you engage in to minimize the impact of secondary traumatization? Where do you seek support to process trauma?