

Creating Equity-Centered Trauma-Informed Policies

4 Foundational Choice Points for Leadership

Effective decision making comes from a place of choice and intention. Creating Trauma-Informed Policies: A Roadmap to Equity describes four leadership “choice points” for the creation, development, and implementation of equity-centered trauma-informed and compassionate public health approaches. Consider the following choice points as you develop and implement your equitable policy.

CHOICE POINT 1

Names and Definitions

In embarking on the journey towards equity-centered trauma-informed policies, it is essential to clarify the intended outcomes and establish language that reflects the public health department's mission and vision. This step involves identifying the outcomes, naming the practices, and informing the policies with clear and intentional language.

Be clear and intentional about language. For example, choose how you define and use:

- **Equity-centered:** Prioritizing the needs and experiences of marginalized communities to address and rectify social, economic, and environmental health inequities through inclusive and just policies, practices, and designs
- **Trauma:** Define what trauma means within the context of public health services and interventions.
- **Trauma-Informed vs. Trauma-Responsive vs. Trauma-Sensitive Public Health Approaches:** Choose the terminology that best aligns with your organization's approach to addressing trauma within community health initiatives.
- **Resiliency-Oriented Policies:** Explore policies that promote resilience and empower communities to overcome trauma's impacts.
- **Compassionate Policies:** Emphasize policies that foster empathy, understanding, and support for individuals affected by trauma.
- **Healing-Centered Engagement:** Focus on policies that center on healing and holistic well-being as integral to public health strategies.

Choices for Leadership:

- How can we use language that encourages diverse stakeholders to actively engage in our equity initiatives?
 - Consider how our language reflects inclusivity, respect, and openness to foster collaboration among diverse groups.
- What values and beliefs are we communicating through our equity efforts, and what outcomes do we aim to achieve?
 - Clarify the core values and beliefs that underpin our commitment to equity. Define clear outcomes aligned with our mission to promote equitable health outcomes.
- Which definitions best align with our organization's vision and mission of equity?
 - Evaluate definitions and frameworks that resonate with our vision of equitable health and well-being for all communities we serve.
- What language preferences exist within our community, and how can we align our communication to ensure inclusivity?
 - Identify language preferences among local residents, partners, funders, and stakeholders. Ensure our terminology aligns to foster effective communication and mutual understanding.
- How can we ensure that our language and messaging reflect the values and priorities of our diverse stakeholders?
 - Ensure that our communication strategy reflects the diverse perspectives, needs, and priorities of our stakeholders, fostering an environment of equity and collaboration.

CHOICE POINT 2

Platform & Levers:

What is the right policy entry point? Which avenue will allow the policy to carry the most impact? Select the platform(s) for optimal policy change and advocacy.

Effective policies in public health require a platform, which can range from broader federal or state systems to localized platforms within individual communities or targeted geographic locations. Choose the platform that will most impact practice shift in a sustainable, equitable manner.

Choices for Leadership:

- Which platform will maximize the culture shift desired?
- Is it more sustainable to create policy from the top down or bottom up?
- How might leadership from both levels collaborate to create policies that are aligned and mutually informing?

CHOICE POINT 3

Approach:

Is it most effective and sustaining to add to, amend, align, or drop current policies, or to add new policy? Assess where you are to inform the most effective and efficient approach.

Developing equity-centered trauma-informed public health policies doesn't always necessitate drafting new regulations immediately.

- **Include** policies that demonstrate a commitment to equity-centered trauma-informed care and principles for effective implementation (e.g., policies ensuring ongoing professional development, training for staff).
- **Remove** policies identified as trauma-uninformed, inequitable, and unnecessary, particularly those contributing to re-traumatization or employing restrictive practices.
- **Adjust** essential policies that cannot be removed due to legal requirements; modify their provisions or language to align with equity-centered trauma-informed perspectives (e.g., workforce policies).
- **Adapt** equitable legislation that exist in another system (e.g., behavioral health, community health clinics, etc.) and tailor it for public health systems and environments.
- **Harmonize** existing equitable policies and practices (e.g., emergency preparedness and response, service delivery, community health policies) to ensure coherence and effectiveness

Choices for Leadership:

- What policies and practices need to be added?
- What current policies and practices need to be dropped?
- What current policies and practices can't be dropped but can be amended?
- What role does the board of health and hospitals and mayor play in this process?
- Are there other systems from which you might adapt policy or legislation?
- What is your process for identifying and aligning current policy?

This tool was re-designed to support public health systems on their journey to advance equity.

Reference: Pacific Southwest (HHS Region 9). Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTC): Funded by SAMHSA

CHOICE POINT 4

Match Process to Product:

How might the process of developing the policy embody equity-centered trauma-informed principles? Mirror an equitable approach in the development of the policy.

Equity-centered trauma-informed policy development is most impactful when the process itself models equitable principles and values. The "how" deeply impacts the "what."

Choices for Leadership:

- How will we collaborate with support staff, healthcare professionals across departments/roles, administrators, community members, and critical stakeholders?
- How might written policies and procedures include a focus on equity, workplace safety, and confidentiality within the organization?
- How might we ensure that all levels of the organization have emergency readiness, response, and recovery procedures that are collaboratively developed with community stakeholders, clearly documented, easily accessible, and regularly reviewed for accuracy?
- How do staffing policies demonstrate a commitment to providing culturally relevant and equity-centered trauma-informed training events for all staff?
- What policies and procedures are in place to foster an inclusive workplace culture and climate, and to guide governance, policy-making, service delivery, and evaluation within the organization?

