

EXPLORING WHY RESEARCHING TRAUMA- INFORMED RESPONSES MATTERS FOR OLDER ADULTS

OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL'S ELDER ABUSE COMMISSION
2023 WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY CONFERENCE

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Panelists: Patricia Brownell, PhD
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WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

- **Explore** concepts of trauma and how it relates to mistreatment of older adult research.
- **Discuss** how trauma in older adults can be recognized and measured.
- **Present** examples of available research that has focused on trauma and persons harmed by abuse, neglect and violence.
- **Discuss** additional research needs to focus on elder justice remedies, interventions and best practices?
- **Explore** how Ohio can learn from research conducted in other parts of the country and the world to map out future research needs to benefit elder justice professionals and older Ohioans they serve.
- **Focus** special attention on domestic violence, adult protection and aging service delivery systems.

6/29/2023

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN RESEARCHERS AND PRACTITIONERS: A COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIP

- **Elements of Research:** State a question or problem to study
- *A systematic collection of related data*
- *Analysis using a defined method*
- *Publication of the results in response to the initial question or problem to expand knowledge that is useful and can be applied to practice settings.*
- **Types of Research Methods/Designs:** Choose best method to answer question
- *Quantitative (e.g., use of administrative data, survey data); Qualitative (e.g., interviews, focus groups); Intervention (e.g., pre/post); Quality Assurance (e.g., systems analysis, staff-focused)*
- **Resource:** NAPS/NCPEA Guidelines for Evaluating and Applying Research in Adult Protective Services

OLDER ADULT ABUSE AND TRAUMA THEORY FROM A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE: A PARADIGM SHIFT



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OLDER ADULT ABUSE AND TRAUMA THEORY FROM A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE: A PARADIGM SHIFT

- Recent prevalence and prospective studies on interpersonal violence show a link between child abuse, intimate partner violence and older adult mistreatment that did not emerge from stage-specific studies.
- Along with emerging developmental understanding of interpersonal violence from a life course perspective, early life trauma is emerging as an explanatory theory of interpersonal violence across the lifespan.
- In the field of elder abuse, the life course perspective challenges more traditional explanations such as ageism.
- It creates new opportunities for prevention and intervention strategies to end violence against older people.

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A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE ON TRAUMA

What Are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, mean potentially traumatic events in childhood (0-17 years) such as neglect and experiencing or witnessing violence.

ACEs can negatively impact physical, mental, emotional, and behavioral development.

ACEs can also have lasting effects on health, well-being, and prosperity well into adulthood.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/resources.html> 6/29/2023 6

A LIFE COURSE PERSPECTIVE ON TRAUMA

- The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study was initiated by Kaiser Permanente and the US Centers for Disease Control in the 1990s, using a prospective study design, to follow health care patients from childhood into old age.
- Early experiences of neglect, abuse and violence and adult behavioral and health outcomes, including intimate partner violence and suicidal behaviors are linked according to the US Adult Protective Services Technical Resource Center.
- American psychiatrist Judith Herman originated the term "complex trauma" to describe the long-term consequences of family and intimate partner violence, trafficking and other life-threatening situations if not treated.
- Psychologist Marsha Linehan helped to expand understanding of how lack of attunement by caregivers of vulnerable children in developmentally formative years can lead to lasting personality distortions and difficulty mastering adult life tasks like intimate partner relationships, family, childrearing and work.

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DEFINING TRAUMA



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DEFINITION OF TRAUMA

- Trauma is defined by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration (SAMSHA) as circumstances or events that are perceived as physically or emotionally threatening or harmful by individuals and have a lasting negative effect on their functioning as well as their spiritual, emotional, social and mental being.

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WHY FOCUS ON TRAUMA IN ELDER ABUSE?

Many People Report ACEs

According to data collected from more than 144,000 adults across 25 states between 2015 and 2017:



Some Groups Are More Likely to Have Experienced ACEs

Multiple studies show that people who identified as members of these groups as adults reported experiencing significantly more ACEs:



QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How do we track and measure outcomes and interventions for helping older victims of abuse?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What is the most effective way to identify older adults coping with trauma, and encourage support with communication about their feelings/healing?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How can trauma-informed practices with younger victims be adapted to older victims?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What protective factors help older adults recover from trauma?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

How do older adults of different races and cultural backgrounds understand abuse and trauma?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Which interventions overall lead to the best short- and long-term outcomes?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

What common practices in hospitals, nursing homes and other environments unwittingly retraumatize older victims, and how can they be avoided?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

Why and how do mandatory reporting laws sometimes undermine efforts to provide care and services that promote recovery and can retraumatize older people?

FINAL THOUGHTS



Elderliness by VinithChander


