Implementing trauma-informed care at vaccine clinics

**What is trauma-informed care?** Trauma-informed care (TIC) is a framework that involves understanding, recognizing and responding to the effects of all types of trauma. Trauma-informed care also emphasizes physical, psychological and emotional safety for both consumers and providers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment.

**Why is it important?** Trauma is pervasive throughout communities. Trauma can be acute, chronic or complex. Trauma can also be historical, generational and epigenetic. BIPOC and LGBTQ communities also face systemic oppression/truma, creating a distrust in the government and medical systems. Those trying to be helpful can inadvertently trigger a trauma response when administering vaccines.

**How do you implement it?** You can reduce the unintentional triggering of individuals by employing trauma-informed core principles.

**Safety**
Convey emotional and physical safety

- Utilize trusted people to vaccinate or reach out.
- Use trusted places to vaccinate.
- Provide information ahead of time — no surprises.
- Slow down speech or pace of conversation.
- Introduce and identify yourself.
- Allow people to answer, or not, as they feel comfortable.
- Do not touch or hug without permission.
- Ask permission before doing anything.

**Trustworthiness**
Do what you say you are going to do when you say you are going to do it

- Follow through on agreements.
- Relationship build: “How are you feeling today?”
- Describe what you are going to do before you do it.
- Actively listen/give time to read/fill out documents, and answer/ask questions (plan a longer time block just in case).
- Demonstrate respect by reflecting their values and language.
- When asked a question you are not sure how to answer, have the courage to say, “I don’t know,” and offer to get back to them later (and really get back).
- Offer to show the tools you are using and describe their functions/purposes, if necessary.
- Repeat people’s questions/responses in your own words to ensure you understood them correctly.

**Choice and collaboration**
Ensure individuals feel they are a part of what’s happening and have choice

- Ask about what is going on with them.
- Create the plan together.
- Respond to requests in an open manner.
- Avoid preconceived notions about others based on what you see.
- Ask name and pronoun preference (sincerely acknowledge that you may not be saying their names perfectly well).
- Offer choice around where to sit.
- Offer choice of injection site.

**Empowerment**
Ensure individuals feel they are in control of what’s happening

- Encourage choice making (people can stop the process at any point without negative consequences).
- Express their autonomy.
- Provide explanations/descriptions of what you are going to do at every step, allow/encourage people to ask questions at any point.