Trauma Basics  
SW 540, HS 540, EDUC 540  
Winter 2019

Instructor: Todd I. Herrenkohl, PhD, Professor, School of Social Work  
Office: SSWB 2712  
Email: tih@umich.edu  
Phone: 734-763-9382

COURSE OVERVIEW

This is a workshop-based inter-professional education course offered by UM School of Social Work in partnership with the School of Nursing and School of Education. It is the first course in a 3-course sequence in Trauma-Informed Practice (TIP).

COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course will provide basic, foundational knowledge about the cognitive, social-emotional, behavioral, and health-related outcomes of trauma in children. A key focus of the course will be on enhancing awareness of trauma in children; assessing and responding to the needs of children who encounter trauma; and changing systems to become more responsive to vulnerable children and their families. The course will emphasize principles of inter-professional education, which focuses on helping students in the professions of social work, nursing, and education work collaboratively in generalist and specialty practice roles.

COURSE FORMAT

This course uses a series of pre-learning readings, group discussions, and writing reflections to prepare students for an all-day workshop on Saturday, February 2, 2019 that will include short didactic presentations, small group discussions, and exercises that deepen knowledge about trauma and inter-professionals roles. Students will contribute their own knowledge and domain expertise throughout the course.

Pre-Learning (Online)

Pre-learning readings and assignments will provide background knowledge for Saturday workshop. Each pre-learning written assignment should be completed during the week it is assigned, leading up to the workshop on February 2nd. Written work consists journal entries in a document that can be uploaded in Canvas at least two days prior to the workshop. Each student must also prepare a 1-page summative statement at the end of the pre-learning component of the course that connects content from assigned readings and small group discussions to inter-professional work in trauma-informed systems. In this
statement, please explain how content applies to the roles and functions of professional social workers, educators, or nurses who work in schools and other systems (1-2 paragraphs); where professional roles intersect (1 paragraph), and how inter-professional teams can serve the needs of vulnerable children and their families (1 paragraph).

While the pre-learning component of the course focuses primarily on small group discussion, questions about the readings can also be posted to Canvas for instructor comment. Your questions will be answered at the end of each pre-learning week of the course.

**Week 1: Group Introductions and Context Setting**

**Part 1: Group Introductions**

Use Google Hangouts or another platform to join with your group by video conference. Introduce yourself to the group and discuss the following questions. All members are expected to participate.

- What would you like to learn in this course and how does the content relate to your educational and/or professional career goals?
- How familiar are you with research on adversity and trauma in children, and with programs designed to mitigate the effects of trauma in vulnerable groups?
- Do you have experience with inter-professional or team-based models of practice? If so, how did these function and what was their purpose. What do you recall about the experience?

Following this first meeting, write an electronic journal entry of approximately one paragraph that summarizes what excites you about the course and how content relates to your professional interests.

**Part 2: Setting the Context: Social Determinants of Health**

Also within the first week, use Canvas to access and read the following article. After reading the article, respond in your journal to the questions below. Responses to each question should be approximately one paragraph in length, appropriately titled with the question you are addressing.


- How does research on the social determinants of health relate to questions one might ask about childhood adversities and developmental outcomes for children and youth?
- Why do racial and gender disparities in health persist despite overall improvements in life expectancy?
- How do socioeconomic disadvantages relate to health disparities and how does each compare to what has been documented about geographic differences in mortality?
Week 2: Ecological Theory of Child Development

Bronfenbrenner’s (1994) social ecological model of child development is depicted in the attached figure. After reading the article below by Belsky (1980), which refers to Bronfenbrenner’s model, reconnect with your group (using Google Hangouts or another platform) to discuss the relevance of this theory to child development and child trauma. Following your discussion, provide a half page synopsis of the conversation in your journal. In your synopsis, summarize how the theory applies to inter-professional work with children and families.


Week 3: Adverse Childhood Experiences

The following section describes research by Felitti et al. (1998) on the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. After reading the article and reviewing the summary, post three discussion questions for an online discussion with your group. The questions you post should relate very specifically to the topic of ACEs and/or findings from the Felitti et al. study. Please include your questions as a journal entry and then write a 1-paragraph summary of the contributions of this work to inter-professional practice.


Week 4: Toxic Stress

The following article and video explain how toxic stress adversely affects children’s health and development. Read the article and then watch the video. Afterwards, use Google Hangouts or another platform to discuss in your small groups how stress impacts the brain and particularly how chronic stress leads to changes brain structure that cause impairment in children. Explain the consequences of these changes for children’s learning and behavior in schools and other systems? Include your explanation as a half page summary in your journal.


Video: How Brains are Built: The Core Story of Brain Development
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LmVWOe1ky8s

Workshop (in-Person)

It is critical that all pre-learning work be completed before the Saturday workshop. To attend the workshop on February 2nd journals and summative statements must be uploaded to Canvas as one Word document by Thursday, July 31st at 5pm. These documents should be appropriately titled with your name and student number. If this document is not uploaded two days prior to the workshop, you will be
informed that the pre-learning component of the course is incomplete and you will not be allowed to continue.

The workshop will consist of short didactic presentations, group discussion, and exercises. The following content areas will be covered during the morning and afternoon sessions: (1) Resilience and Adaptation to Stress; (2) Principles of Trauma-Informed Practices and Programs; and (3) Inter-Professional Collaboration Principles Applied to Trauma Work.

**Post-Workshop Debriefing (Online)**

Following the workshop, reconnect online with your group another time using Google Hangouts or another platform. Discuss your reactions to the workshop using these elements for debriefing:

1. What were your reactions to the day? How did it feel in the moment? What thoughts did you have about the experience later?
2. What were the most growth-producing parts for you?
3. What did you find challenging, puzzling, or difficult?
4. What do you plan to carry forward into your future practice?

**Post-Workshop Written Reflections (Online)**

Following the workshop, please upload by to Canvas by 5pm on Friday, February 9th one consolidated Word document (appropriately labeled with your name and student number) that includes the following. Upon receipt of your work, you will be assigned a “satisfactory” course completion grade.

1. Final journal entry that provides a short (half page) summary of any take-home points from the workshop.
2. One page essay that responds to the following: Imagine yourself in the future speaking to members of your own profession about working with youth in schools. Outline for them 2-3 steps that professionals within your discipline can take to become more responsive to research on topics covered by the course, including risk and resiliency. In your response, please take a moment to refer back to earlier journal entries and readings that support and strengthen your recommendations.