

LIVINGSTON COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES COLLABORATIVE BODY (HSCB)

Health and Human Service Needs FACT SHEET

Children and Trauma in Livingston County

September 2018

What is “Trauma”? According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network, trauma is a scary, dangerous, or violent event that can happen to any or all members of a family. Some types of trauma include: accidents or injuries, serious illness, house fires, crimes, community and/or school violence, sudden loss of a loved one or pet, death of a family member, violence in the family, abuse, neglect, and homelessness. “Children who suffer from child traumatic stress have developed reactions to trauma that linger and affect their daily lives long after the traumatic event has ended.”

“Complex Trauma” describes both children’s exposure to multiple traumatic events, often of an invasive, interpersonal nature, and the wide-ranging, long-term impact of this exposure. These events are severe and pervasive, such as abuse or profound neglect.

What is the impact of trauma? Each member of the family may experience trauma differently but each individual family member’s adaptation is linked to the reactions and responses of the others. Children who have been exposed to traumatic events can manifest in behaviors like:

- hyper-vigilance, aggression, truancy, risk taking behaviors, withdrawal, sleeping difficulties, depression, and significant mood swings.

Often, such symptoms may not be immediately revealed and are misinterpreted as learning disorders or acting out. If we can understand the impact of trauma then we can more fully understand a child’s needs and provide appropriate services.

- 1 of every 8 children in our state will experience confirmed maltreatment.
- According to the 2018 Kids Count in Michigan Book, there were 473 confirmed cases of abuse and neglect in Livingston County
- 22% of children in the United States have had two or more adverse experiences, according to the latest results from the National Survey of Children’s Health.
- Children with early adverse childhood experiences are 2-5 times more likely to have adult substance abuse, adult depression and/or adult heart disease.¹
- According to the 2015 American Academy of Pediatrics *Helping Foster and Adoptive Families Cope with Trauma* publication:
 - Children in foster care suffer a high incidence of developmental delays, as high as 25% in some age groups.
 - Rates of clinical Post Traumatic Stress Disorder as high as 25% have been reported.
 - Over 80% of children aging out of foster care have received a psychiatric diagnosis.



Why is this issue so important to Livingston County? In 2017, Livingston County had over 140 children living in foster care. These children are especially vulnerable to the effects of trauma. Despite these compelling numbers of youth in foster care, there are many youth in our county who have experienced trauma, but who have not been identified as such. Often their behaviors are misdiagnosed and misunderstood, which influences their school and life experiences.

What programs & services exist? The Livingston County Trauma Informed System of Care (TISOC) is comprised of an interdisciplinary team of leaders from LACASA, Community Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services, Livingston Educational Service Agency, Human Services Collaborative Body, Livingston County Courts, as well as community professionals and foster parents.

The TISOC offers oversight and gatekeeping for enrollment, program implementation, and the Livingston Trauma Assessment/Consultation Team (LTAT). The TISOC reviews all referrals and cases for assessment/consultation based on criteria and community priorities. The LTAT team is comprised of local professionals including social workers, counselors, occupational therapists, and speech therapists. LTAT members receive specialized training and coaching from the Southwest Michigan Trauma Assessment Center, a nationally recognized provider of trauma assessments. The team completes a report, which details findings and recommendations. In 2017-18 – Trauma Assessments and consultations were completed for 19 children.

Additionally, Livingston County's TISOC provides training for caregivers and providers (including foster parents). The training series focuses on the impact of trauma, and prepares caregivers to see behaviors through the lens of trauma and to learn evidence-based strategies and interventions to use with this vulnerable population. In 2017-18 – 289 Providers and Caregivers were trained.

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#)
- [National Center for Trauma-Informed Care](#)
- www.michigan.gov/traumatoxicstress

What can the community do to help?

Safety and structure are priorities in trauma intervention. The experience of safety is critical to relieving the experience of trauma.

- Believe a child.
- Work with your local school district, law enforcement, and other supportive agencies to strengthen our trauma-informed community.
- Support continued use of evidenced based treatment models for traumatized youth.
- Link children and families with resources and supports.
- Participate in community presentations and actions to inform and educate.
- Talk about it. Don't be afraid to address it, and to advocate for change.

InBrief: The Impact of Early Adversity on Children's Development, The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma

