

Trauma-Informed Adjudication of Youth

Children who must navigate tuff neighborhoods and challenged families develop heightened survival reflexes. For these children knowing when to flee, fight or disappear into the woodwork are important skills for staying safe.

When these young people bring this survival skill set to school they are often labeled as defiant or non-compliant. When these youth are confronted by authorities they can be preserved as delinquent.

It is important that schools officials and legal authorities understand how trauma impacts the behavior of these children. Institutions that educate or adjudicate youth need to know the particular trauma history of the child to best address their needs.

Every child who is suspended or adjudicated should be screened to assess their Adverse Childhood Experiences. This information is vital to creating a plan and a process for supporting the healthy development of these youth.

The science of Youth Development has proven that building on the child's strengths is effective while focusing on weakness is not. One of the challenges for traumatized children is self-identifying their strengths. Youth who are constantly labeled as defiant, non-compliant or delinquent don't perceive themselves to have strengths. All humans regardless of trauma have strengths.

Those in authority best serve these youth by patiently interviewing them, identifying and reflecting back the strengths perceived and then developing a rehabilitative plan that builds on this child's particular strengths.

Attachment

Understanding Trauma: Learning Brain vs Survival Brain (4:56)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoqaUANGvpA>