

Trauma- and Resiliency-Informed Systems Initiative

Trauma-Informed Organizational Practices Assessment

Preparing Your Organization



Developed in partnership with
TRAUMA TRANSFORMED
HAMAI CONSULTING

INTRODUCTION

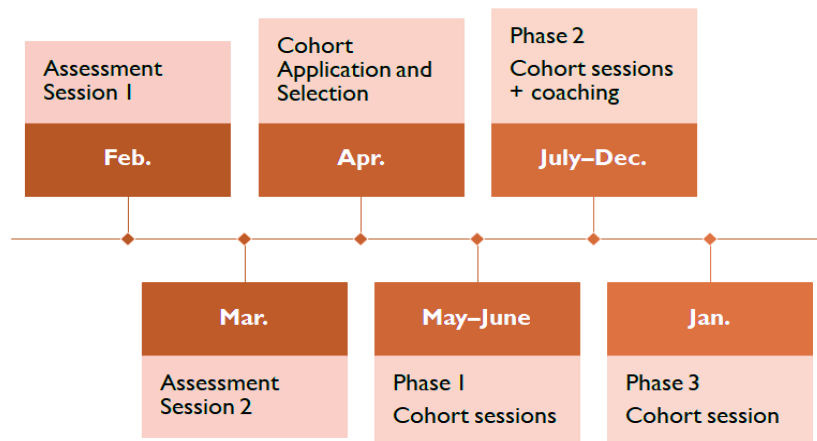
First 5 San Mateo County (F5SMC) invites you to participate in a free **Trauma-Informed Organizational (TIO) Practices Assessment** created to help improve the health and functioning of your agency from a trauma-informed perspective. The assessment is designed to help your organization assess its strengths in seven key areas drawing from the six principles of trauma-informed care according to SAMSHA:

- Safety
- Trustworthiness and Transparency
- Peer Support
- Collaboration and Mutuality
- Empowerment, Voice, and Choice
- Cultural, Historical, Race and Gender Awareness
- Administrative and Policy Support for a Trauma-Informed Approach

The tool can be used to begin the conversation about how to create an institutional culture that is more humane, collaborative, and sensitive to the needs of all.

The assessment will be administered by Learning for Action (LFA), an independent third party hired by F5SMC to collect and collate the data and summarize the results for your organization. The results will not identify the names of those who have responded. Research staff at F5SMC and LFA are the only people who will have access to the raw data. We will provide each participating organization with a summary of the findings of the completed assessments and help the organization make sense of the data.

On February 10th, we will present the assessment tool to interested parties, as well as talk about other opportunities for you to receive organizational support, like a peer-based learning cohort and individual organizational coaching. Agencies can elect to complete the assessment tool only, or to apply for additional support. No further commitment is expected or required of those who take the assessment. For organizations interested in applying to participate in a more extended process with additional support, this is the anticipated timeline:



PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Because we believe it is important that you undertake the TIO Practices Assessment in a trauma-informed way, we are offering you this guide with some advice and steps to consider on how to successfully launch your TIO assessment effort. The first set of items is related to preparation, and the second set of items is related to communication.

PREPARATION

Prior to launching the TIO Assessment, you will need to make important decisions regarding who will shepherd the process (including naming an agency lead), when to send out the assessment, and how to communicate about the assessment to staff.

SUGGESTED PRE-ASSESSMENT STEPS

- **Organize an Assessment Implementation Team.** We recommend involving multiple layers of staff in help with making decisions and implementing the steps suggested in this document.
- **Establish the window of time for inviting assessment responses.** For agencies to apply to be considered for inclusion in the cohort and coaching opportunity, the tool would need to be completed by March 29th.
- **Determine modes of communication to introduce the assessment.** You might consider all-staff meeting, email, physical fliers/posters, etc.
- **Create key messages to ensure consistency.** Determine how the purpose of the assessment will be communicated and who will communicate about it.
- **Decide which parts of the organization will be filling out the assessment tool.** The assessment is intended for all staff within the agency, but you may choose to start with all staff within one department, division, program, or site, for example.
- **Determine how results will be shared.** Consider how the Assessment Implementation Team will share results back with those who participated in the assessment process.
- **Decide what incentives can be offered to increase participation.** Some examples are a team lunch, praise/recognition, or time off.

What to Keep in Mind

- **Be very mindful of how you introduce and frame the TIO Assessment to staff.** Since it is voluntary, you should be prepared to make the case for why staff should want to fill it out. For example, communicate with staff about how assessing the status of your trauma-informed practices fits in with the values of the organization or how it will be used to improve staff experience. In some organizations, assessment feedback can be used to open up critical conversations, which ultimately lead to dramatic improvement in staff morale.
- **Be sensitive to individual needs and know that you might need to structure the process differently for different people.** For example, not all staff may have ready access to a computer, so you may need to provide a computer or space to fill out the assessment. Depending on your workforce, you may need to provide language support.
- **This assessment asks respondents to think about issues such as trauma, discrimination and oppression based on race and gender, as well as power dynamics within the workplace.** Because you are asking your staff to speak up about difficult topics and provide honest feedback, consider how you can provide a safe way for people to get support about these challenging topics. Be prepared to handle emotional triggers based on past disappointments or unresolved issues that might still be lingering in the organization.
- **Consider how to use the assessment process as a culture-building activity.** For example, you might create cooperative competition across the organization to encourage staff to motivate each other (such as if a certain percentage of staff complete this, everyone will get a prize). Or perhaps you might use the process as an opportunity to have a conversation about hopes or expectations.
- **Always appreciate each individual's participation and effort during the process.** Publicly reward risk taking and truth telling. This will encourage staff to fill out the assessment and to be honest. Respect people's decision not to participate as well, and don't coerce staff into taking it.

COMMUNICATING WITH STAFF

It is important to communicate about the assessment before, during, and after administration. Key points to communicate include the purpose of the assessment, how it will be used, who will receive a summary of the agency results, and how those results will be shared with others who participated in the assessment. This list provides what information to communicate at each stage.

BEFORE

- Tell staff about the assessment and its objectives.
- Let them know when and how information will be collected.
- Disclose who will see the results and discuss how results will be shared and used.
- Provide information on confidentiality of responses.
- Stress the value and importance of participation.
- Let staff know whom they can go to if they have questions or are having difficulty completing or accessing the assessment.
- Communicate when the assessment will open and for how long.

DURING

- Remind staff of the objectives of the assessment and the importance of their input
- Provide staff with protected time to take the assessment.
- Provide language support and technological support if needed.
- Reinforce the confidentiality of results.
- Remind staff of when the assessment closes.
- Let staff know whom they can go to if they have questions or are having difficulty completing or accessing the assessment.

AFTER

- Thank staff for their participation.
- Tell staff how results will be used and let them know if there are opportunities for them to participate in next steps.
- Provide staff with a summary of results.
- Give staff an opportunity to give feedback or input into the results. *(Please join our follow-up session on March 29th from 11:00-12:30 for more discussion on this.)*
- Provide updates on action steps, decisions, and progress made as a result of the assessment input.

To help you with your communications, here is a sample letter introducing the assessment process that you can tailor for your agency:

In the next month, our organization will undergo a **Trauma-Informed Organizational Practices Assessment** with support from First 5 San Mateo County (F5SMC). It is a tool we can use to begin the conversation about how to use TIO principles to improve our work lives with the goal of creating an institution that is more humane, more collaborative, and more sensitive to each other.

Agencies who conscientiously assess their current state are able to better understand their organizational culture and clarify areas for potential change and growth. In keeping with the central tenets of a trauma-informed system approach, which advocates for the inclusion of the full workforce, the TIO Assessment is meant to include all staff, from file clerk to executive leadership, and all positions in between. The questions are not exclusive to service providers or management but are instead designed to capture the experience across the workforce.

Please look out for a link to participate on [XX date]! You will be able to access it online via Survey Monkey. Staff will have [XX] weeks to complete it, and we will send reminders before the deadline.

The assessments will be administered by Learning for Action (LFA), an independent third party hired by F5SMC to collect and collate the data and summarize the results for our organization. The assessment will not collect the names of anyone who responds, although it will collect information about their role in the organization. **Research staff at F5SMC and LFA are the only people who will have access to the raw data.**

We have organized a team, led by [names of assessment team leaders], to help shepherd the assessment process. This team will receive the data summaries. The Assessment will not be used in performance evaluations or disciplinary actions, nor for any purpose other than what is described here. It is an entirely voluntary assessment that staff should see as a meaningful way to have their voices heard and to give input to shape future workplace changes.

The assessment is just the beginning, and we hope you'll participate in the process of helping [agency name] become a more trauma-informed workplace that provides trauma-informed services to our clients.

If you have any questions about this assessment effort at our agency, please contact [names and contact info of assessment team leaders]. You may also reach out to Shahla de Leon at LFA (shahla.deleon@learningforaction.com) or Jenifer Clark at F5SMC (jdclark@smcgov.org) with questions about the assessment tool. Thank you!

Thank you for your interest in implementing the Trauma-Informed Organizational Practices Assessment, and we hope to see you on February 10th!