

2025



TRAUMA-INFORMED COMMUNITY OF FAITH

A Guide for Becoming a Trauma-Informed
Community of Faith

Resilient  GEORGIA

Definition: What Does it Mean to be a Trauma-Informed Community of Faith?

People often turn to their faith or spiritual communities for support and comfort during hardships. Disturbing experiences that induce significant fear, suffering, or intense emotions are known as traumatic events, which can deeply impact a person's wellbeing. Traumatic events can arise from human actions (e.g., violence) or natural occurrences (e.g., natural disasters), which can bring about reflection on the value and meaning of life.¹

A trauma-informed approach shifts the focus from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" This compassionate perspective moves away from assigning blame and helps to de-stigmatize mental health issues. For communities of faith and spirituality, integrating this approach means enhancing their ability to support members effectively through trauma, fostering a more empathetic and understanding environment.

Why it Matters: Becoming Trauma-Informed

Communities of faith are a powerful resource to help build individual and community resilience. People that have experienced trauma are incredibly resilient, meaning they have developed skills to cope with life's challenges. Resilience is the ability to navigate adversity and grow stronger through challenging experiences. This can result in profound personal growth. Faith communities foster resilience by offering a wide range of resources, including social support, a sense of purpose, emotional healing, and guidance during challenging times. To better serve community members, it is also important to understand the impact of trauma and integrate trauma-informed practices. By extending compassionate practices to everyone, the community prevents re-traumatization and nurtures healing.



Examples of Trauma-Informed Initiatives

Aligning Community Systems for Resilience Initiative (ACSRI) is a Resilient Georgia Regional partner based in Clayton County. Co-led by the **Georgia Campaign for Adolescent Power & Potential (GCAPP)** and **Community Health Solutions (CHS)**, ACSRI collaborates with communities of faith, faith leaders, and institutions, helping to bring **Connections Matter Georgia** trainings to local churches. This training shares how relationships shape our brains, and how each connection strengthens communities.

The **Sacred Series Toolkit: Becoming a Trauma-Informed Faith Community** by the NC Council of Churches helps faith communities adopt trauma-informed practices. It includes key definitions, examples of supportive prayers and rituals, and practical steps based on **Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Association (SAMHSA) Six Principles of a Trauma Informed Approach**. The toolkit offers strategies for addressing trauma in worship, supporting mental health, and working with other organizations, all while emphasizing safety, trust, and cultural awareness.



Training Resources for Communities of Faith and Leaders



TRAUMA-AWARE

- **Connections Matter Georgia** training helps faith communities become more trauma-informed by teaching them to understand trauma's effects and create supportive environments. The training covers prevention strategies like parenting classes, fostering empathetic interactions, and enhancing community resilience.
- **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life's Resiliency and Emotional Wellness Program** offers strategies for caregivers to build children's resilience. Communities of faith can adopt these strategies by hosting expert-led workshops and support groups on managing stress and navigating challenges. By integrating resilience lessons into religious education and youth programs, faith communities create supportive environments that help children cope with life's ups and downs.
- **CDC VetoViolence's Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** program provides essential training to understand, recognize, and prevent ACEs, which impact children's health and well-being and have long-term effects on adult health and society. This training helps create healthier childhoods and brighter futures. There are modules specifically designed for members and leaders within faith communities.



TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

- **Texas Christian University's Trust Based Relational Intervention** is a trauma-informed approach for supporting vulnerable children who have experienced adversity. By applying Empowering, Connecting, and Correcting Principles, TBRI® helps meet children's physical, emotional, and behavioral needs. Faith communities can use TBRI® to build nurturing, trusting relationships that enhance children's well-being and resilience. Resources like books, DVDs, and training courses are available to support effective implementation.
- **Dr. Kristen Neff's Mindful Self-Compassion Training** teaches participants to treat themselves with the kindness they would offer a friend. The course includes lectures, discussions, and exercises to manage distressing emotions and use kindness as motivation. For faith communities, this training fosters self-compassion, enhancing personal well-being and supporting a compassionate, empathetic community that aligns with core faith values.



TRAUMA-SENSITIVE

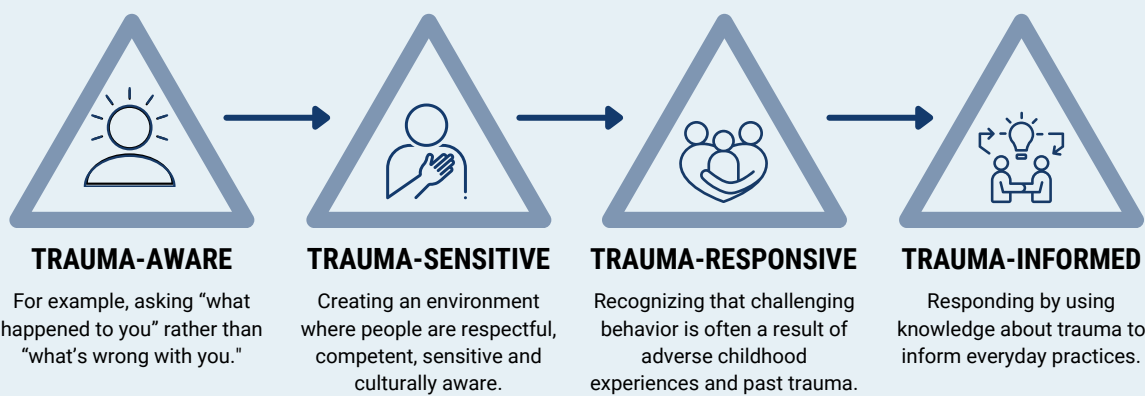
- **The Community Resiliency Model (CRM)** equips communities of faith with six wellness skills—Tracking, Resourcing, Grounding, Gesturing, Help Now!, and Shift and Stay—to help manage stress and trauma. By integrating CRM, these organizations can enhance emotional regulation, reduce physical symptoms like pain, and effectively address stress and burnout, fostering a more resilient community.



TRAUMA-INFORMED

- **ARC Trainers** provide global trauma-informed training based on attachment, regulations, and competency. They offer essential tools to create supportive environments that address attachment and self-regulation needs. The program includes workshops and ongoing training, with a commitment of at least one year, to help faith communities support members through trauma and build resilience.
- **CCISE at Life University's Compassionate Integrity Training** provides communities of faith with a framework to deepen their commitment to values like kindness and compassion. By integrating CIT principles, organizations can enhance community outreach, improve conflict resolution, and foster a more empathetic environment. CIT's focus on self-regulation, self-compassion, and ethical living aligns with many faith traditions, offering practical skills to promote individual and collective flourishing.

The trauma-informed approach is a continuum that progresses through stages. The stages of becoming trauma-informed are:



Additional Support for Communities of Faith and Leaders

- **Calling 988** connects individuals in crisis with trained counselors for immediate mental health and suicide prevention support. Available 24/7, this national hotline offers specialized outreach, including targeted PSAs for **Muslim** and **African American** faith communities. In Georgia, all calls, texts, and chats are handled by the Georgia Crisis and Access Line (GCAL). For active crisis, visit **988 Lifeline**. For more information, visit **988 GA**.
- **Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHCs)** in Georgia offers many types of behavioral health services, with a focus on providing 24-hour crisis care, evidence-based practices, care coordination with local primary care and hospital partners, and integration with physical health care.
- **Community Service Boards (CSB)** also provides a large range of behavioral health services – from crisis stabilization and substance detoxification to counseling and peer support services.
- **The Blue Dove Foundation** empowers the Jewish community to support mental wellness and to address mental illness and addiction openly by fostering conversations, reducing stigma, and providing educational resources. They integrate mental health awareness with Jewish teachings, offer workshops, share personal stories, and provide Narcan training to promote community care. Their work builds resilience by encouraging open dialogue and offering tools to support those in need.
- The **Erasing Shame** podcast addresses mental health stigma in faith communities, focusing on Asian Americans. Through honest discussions on emotional, mental, spiritual, and relational well-being, it promotes growth and thriving in Christian Asian contexts. The podcast is part of **Christian Asian Mental Health**, a program of **Catalyst Wellness Alliance**, and seeks support via subscriptions, sharing, and donations to expand its reach.
- The **Interfaith Children's Movement** Building Resiliency through Interfaith Contemplative Community (BRICC) program empowers Atlanta Metro high school students to build mental health resiliency through interfaith contemplative practices. Guided by experienced teachers, participants cultivate compassion and advocate for policies supporting youth well-being. This free program fosters a supportive, non-coercive environment. Learn more at **www.icmgeorgia.org** or contact Program Director Chris RayAlexander at **chris.ra@icmgeorgia.org**.

What can I do now? Next Steps

- Take a **Connections Matter Georgia** training as an individual or bring the training to your faith community to learn how connections can improve resiliency and prevent re-traumatization. Communities of faith can greatly benefit from this training to better understand how trauma manifests in their communities and to enhance their support for those in need. For more resources tailored to faith settings, visit the **Resilient Georgia Trauma-Informed Training Roadmap**.
- Explore and share trauma-informed resources from **Children's Healthcare of Atlanta Strong4Life's Resiliency and Emotional Wellness** Initiative with your community.
- Consider starting a book study on **What Happened to You** by Oprah Winfrey and Bruce Perry to learn more about trauma and healing. **Positive Childhood Alliance Georgia, Georgia Essentials for Childhood**, and **Georgia Center for Child Advocacy (GCCA)** and other partners have developed this **Discussion and Resource Guide** that can help guide your conversations. Explore more titles by accessing this resource on **faith-based perspectives on trauma and healing**.
- Inspire community involvement by encouraging your faith community, family, and friends to join the **Interfaith Children's Movement (ICM)** in advocating for the mental health and well-being of Georgia's youth. Host advocacy training workshops, engage with policymakers, and amplify youth voices to create a brighter future for all children.

To learn more, access our references **here**.





FOR MORE TRAUMA-INFORMED RESOURCES, VISIT [RESILIENTGA.ORG](https://resilientga.org)

Questions or feedback?
Contact info@resilientga.org.

