

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE

SaintA

www.sainta.org

YOUTH THRIVE™

PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS FOR HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT AND WELL-BEING

AT-A-GLANCE

Initiative Start Date:
2007

Initiative Location:
Statewide



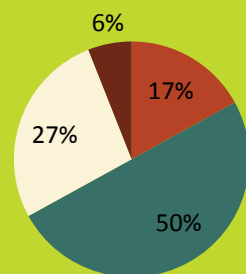
Organization Budget:
\$32 million

Age Range of Youth:
0 – 24 years old

Number of Youth Served:
3,000 annually

Diversity of Youth Served:

- Latino/Hispanic
- Black/African American
- White/Caucasian
- Other/Unknown



ABOUT

SaintA, an organization that provides foster care, mental health and education services, is in the forefront of understanding the impact of trauma on the developing brain and changing policy and practice to reflect that understanding. An essential first step in that shift is changing attitudes and reframing the conversation with youth from “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” In collaboration with Dr. Bruce Perry, of the Child Trauma Academy, and Dr. Robert Anda, co-investigator on the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACE), SaintA is integrating trauma informed practice into all of its services. It is also spearheading training and networking to spread trauma informed care throughout Wisconsin.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- **Assessment** – use Perry’s Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics and other tools to examine youth’s history and current functioning; determine appropriate interventions to mitigate past trauma and re-evaluate interventions over time.
- **Individualized Treatment** – customize therapeutic responses for each youth’s experience; use sensory-based interventions (e.g., dance, sports, knitting, horseback riding) to address lower brain function and self-regulation; provide opportunities for meaningful participation; build caregiver capacity to establish safe environments and consistent relationships.
- **Outreach and Training** – educate other human service professionals and community members to understand the ingredients of trauma informed care; offer training for schools to become trauma-sensitive; have reached over 10,000 practitioners.

HIGHLIGHT

One indication of SaintA’s commitment to being trauma informed throughout its operations is that *all* staff - not just direct service but janitorial, kitchen, administrative and managerial employees - go through training to understand trauma and its impact on youth and families. This has changed how everyone views their work. For example, maintenance staff may now have a different insight into why a young person might damage property. SaintA has incorporated trauma informed commitments into all job descriptions and created a culture where interactions with the children, youth and families are appropriate, empathetic and in line with the overall mission of the organization. Their shared goal is to support youth to heal from the trauma they experienced and, as one youth served by SaintA, said, “be in a situation where you can move forward with all the tools you need.”

Youth Thrive is a research-informed framework developed by the Center for the Study of Social Policy that identifies five protective and promotive factors for youth (age 11-26):

- Youth Resilience
- Social Connections
- Knowledge of Adolescent Development
- Concrete Support in Times of Need
- Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence

The goal of Youth Thrive is to increase the likelihood that all youth are supported in ways that advance healthy development and well-being and reduce the impact of negative life experiences. Youth Thrive focuses particularly on vulnerable youth, beginning with those involved in the child welfare system.

CSSP conducted a national search to identify initiatives that provide compelling examples of programs and policy efforts that build the five protective and promotive factors for youth in the child welfare system. This is a profile of one of the 15 selected exemplary initiatives.

BUILDING THE PROTECTIVE & PROMOTIVE FACTORS

The exemplary initiatives address all or most of the protective and promotive factors. Here are several examples:

Knowledge of Adolescent Development: SaintA fully integrates knowledge about neuroscience and cognitive and emotional development into their practice. This is the foundation of the trauma informed care framework. SaintA works diligently to match youth with a foster family that fits their developmental needs and to maintain continuity and familiarity in their lives so as not to exacerbate trauma with additional changes.

Youth Resilience: SaintA asserts that the experience of trauma is the primary source of the problems experienced by the youth they serve and that relationships are key to reaching youth and mitigating trauma. Strong relationships build resilience and help youth heal, grow and thrive.

USING DATA

SaintA evaluates the effectiveness of their trauma informed practice using a quality improvement process. They create program specific performance report cards to review program activities and outcomes. The approach typically includes assessment of youth's behavior using data from the Child and Adolescent Functional Assessment Scale (CAFAS), the Child and Adolescent Needs and Strengths (CANS), the Trauma Symptom Checklist for Children and the Neurosequential Model of Therapeutics.

A specific example of data analysis of the trauma informed care initiatives comes from a 2011-2012 pilot project involving 30 boys in residential care. The findings were that 100 percent of the boys improved their CAFAS scores from their date of intake to the date of their last CAFAS. This is a noticeable improvement compared to past years – 89 percent improvement in 2011 and 77 percent improvement in 2010 – prior to the trauma informed care initiative.

In addition to its internal evaluation work, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is conducting an outside evaluation of SaintA's project to fully implement trauma informed care in its case management and home-based services with results available in 2016.