



## **Developing Trauma Informed Care Systems in Johnson County**

### **Project Overview**

Research has clearly linked early childhood trauma to poor health outcomes and negative health behaviors such as substance abuse, intimate partner violence, and attempted suicide. The experience of an extreme stress that overwhelms a person's capacity to cope has been shown to modify the brain's development and the person's subsequent response to future stresses triggering the earlier experience and maladaptive coping responses.

The Johnson County Trauma Informed Care Task Force (Task Force) is a group of organizations from multiple sectors in the community that serve people at greater risk of past trauma. The Task Force includes representatives from mental health, juvenile and adult corrections, the sheriff's office, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, substance abuse, and family support and preservation services. Organizations were initially introduced to trauma informed care at the Fall 2011 COMVAC training. Subsequently the Task Force began exploring how trauma informed care might be implemented within each of their systems to improve outcomes for clients and staff.

The Task Force asked UCS to assist in the planning process and UCS was recently awarded a grant from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City to support staff time and related assistance for the process.

### **Why use a trauma informed care model?**

Core to trauma informed care is the question "What has happened to you?" a significant departure from the traditional question "What is wrong with you?" Its practices and perspective emerged from the findings that a high proportion of persons have experienced past trauma, and that past trauma is strongly correlated to poor health outcomes and risky health behaviors as adults. Implementation of trauma informed care in settings serving persons who as a population have much higher rates of past trauma has been shown to significantly reduce assaultive behavior, the need for physical restraints, and maladaptive behaviors that may act as barriers to treatment and recovery. In recognizing the past history of trauma and viewing maladaptive behaviors as coping mechanisms, individuals and those working with them collaborate to empower the individual to take control of their recovery.

### **Why across systems in Johnson County?**

The Task Force recognizes that individuals and families affected by trauma are often connected to multiple systems within the county for services and supports over time. While trauma informed practices and culture at one organization are good, a community-wide system of trauma-informed organizations would reduce the greatest number of barriers and incidences of re-traumatizing episodes.

### **How can my organization connect to the Task Force?**

Valorie Carson, UCS planning director is lead staff for the Task Force. She can be contacted by phone (913.438.4764) or by email [valoriec@ucsjoco.org](mailto:valoriec@ucsjoco.org).