

Series Foreword

Exposure to traumatic events is all too common, increasing the risk for a range of significant mental problems, such as posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression; physical health problems; negative health behaviors, such as smoking and excessive alcohol consumption; impaired social and occupational functioning; and overall lower quality of life. As mass traumas (e.g., September 11, military engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, natural disasters such as Hurricane Katrina) have propelled trauma into a brighter public spotlight, the number of trauma survivors seeking services for mental health consequences will likely increase. Yet despite the far-ranging consequences of trauma and the high rates of exposure, relatively little emphasis is placed on trauma education in undergraduate and graduate training programs for mental health service providers in the United States. Calls for action have appeared in *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy* with such articles as “The Need for Inclusion of Psychological Trauma in the Professional Curriculum: A Call to Action” by Christine A. Courtois and Steven N. Gold (2009) and “The Art and Science of Trauma-Focused Training and Education” by Anne P. DePrince and Elana Newman (2011). The lack of education in the assessment and treatment of trauma-related distress and associated clinical issues at undergraduate and graduate levels increases the urgency to develop effective trauma resources for students as well as postgraduate professionals.

The Concise Guides on Trauma Care series addresses that urgent need by providing truly translational books that bring the best of trauma psychology science to mental health professions working in diverse settings. To do so, the series focuses on what we know (and do not know) about specific trauma topics, with attention to how trauma psychology science translates to diverse populations (diversity broadly defined, in terms of development, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and so forth).

This series represents one of many efforts undertaken by Division 56 (Trauma Psychology) of the American Psychological Association to advance trauma training and education (e.g., see <http://www.apatraumadivision.org/3/directory-resources-links.html>). We are pleased to work with Division 56 and a volunteer editorial board to develop this series, which continues to move forward with the publication of this important guide by Catherine DeCarlo Santiago, Tali Raviv, and Lisa H. Jaycox on school-based interventions for students exposed to trauma. This volume offers a practical and accessible guide for how to infuse school systems with trauma-informed practices that would be beneficial to children and youth exposed to trauma. Improving schools' capacity to address the trauma-related mental health needs of students in order to support their learning and success is relevant to educators, school-based mental health providers, researchers, and policy-makers alike. Santiago and colleagues integrate empirical information with practical implementation considerations while offering a useful overview of school-based prevention and intervention strategies. This practical book, grounded in scientific data, will be of great use to any professional working with children in the school system. Future books in the series will continue to address a range of assessment, treatment, and developmental issues in trauma-informed care.

Ann T. Chu
Anne P. DePrince
Series Editors

Introduction

Kenneth heard his name called and walked proudly across the stage. As he accepted his diploma, he shared a smile with the school social worker who was sitting with the teachers. Few understood how meaningful this moment was, but she certainly had an idea. In middle school, Kenneth was fairly certain he would not graduate from high school and wondered if he would even make it to freshman year. On the verge of expulsion, Kenneth was struggling with behavior problems and depression stemming from a history of multiple traumas, including domestic violence and witnessing neighborhood violence. With the help of the school social worker, Kenneth learned to recognize his triggers and develop ways to calm himself in the moment. The school social worker supported Kenneth in asking his teachers for permission to step outside of the classroom when that was necessary to manage his anger. Over time, Kenneth became more open to sharing portions of his trauma history and ultimately chose to participate in a school-based trauma group with the

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0000072-001>

Creating Healing School Communities: School-Based Interventions for Students Exposed to Trauma,
by C. D. Santiago, T. Raviv, and L. H. Jaycox

Copyright © 2018 by the American Psychological Association. All rights reserved.

encouragement of the social worker and a trusted teacher. Though Kenneth had been reluctant to join a group with other students, after participating, he realized how helpful it had been to see that other students had also experienced trauma and to feel accepted and supported in group. He felt connected to other students and found a safe space to both share his experiences and learn strategies for managing his anger and fears. Though Kenneth continued to struggle with anger and sadness periodically, he felt better able to focus on school and reach out to the social worker for support when needed. How can we help other students like Kenneth heal and reach their graduation day?

If you are a school mental health provider, you have probably worked with at least one student who has experienced trauma. Perhaps, like Kenneth, the trauma has affected the student's school performance and mental health. In this book, you will read about Kenneth and two other students whose stories demonstrate how trauma can manifest in students. You will also read about the best strategies available for supporting students like Kenneth. School mental health providers are tasked with the challenging job of supporting students with mental health needs in schools. The term *school mental health provider* is meant to refer broadly to school-based social workers, psychologists, counselors, and other clinicians who work within the school, including those who are employed directly by the school or school district and those who are employed by community agencies to provide services within schools.

This book provides a practical overview and guide for school mental health providers working with students who have been exposed to trauma. Our purposes are (a) to highlight the need for effective school-based interventions; (b) to review evidence-based interventions for trauma in schools; (c) to provide examples of the core treatment components of such interventions; and (d) to offer recommendations and strategies for successfully implementing these interventions in schools. Three levels of intervention strategies are discussed as is consistent with this Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework: Universal (Tier 1) strategies designed to improve outcomes for all students, Targeted (Tier 2) strategies aimed at selected students, and Intensive (Tier 3) interventions. The evidence for the effectiveness of interventions is reviewed. This book

will guide school mental health providers in applying these interventions in their schools and in supporting educators and other school-based staff in creating classrooms and schools that are sensitive to the needs of students who have experienced trauma. Case vignettes help to illustrate the implementation of core treatment components. Furthermore, we review the common challenges that arise in the school context and suggest ways to overcome these barriers.

We begin with a review of trauma exposure among children and adolescents (Chapter 1) and the impact of this exposure on students' mental health, behavior, learning, and physical health (Chapter 2). In Chapter 3, we provide a rationale for school-based interventions highlighting how many students do not get treatment elsewhere. In Chapter 4, we review universal or schoolwide interventions that can support students exposed to trauma, including strategies for developing trauma-sensitive classrooms and schools. Chapter 5 discusses strategies that can be used by school mental health providers prior to implementing a targeted (Tier 2) intervention in their school, such as partnering with teachers and administrators and identifying students for intervention groups. Next, Chapter 6 summarizes the key components of evidence-based interventions, using case vignettes to illustrate how different skills may be implemented. Chapter 7 reviews Tier 2 and Tier 3 interventions for trauma in schools and the current level of evidence for such interventions. Finally, in Chapter 8, we highlight some of the common considerations and challenges faced by school mental health practitioners along with strategies for overcoming them. The resource list at the end of book summarizes useful websites, links, and sources of additional information. The numbered resources referenced in the text refer to items on the resource list.

As highlighted throughout this volume, implementing trauma interventions in schools can ensure that students receive needed treatment that they are unlikely to access outside of school. By receiving evidence-based support in schools, these students have the opportunity to heal from trauma. School-based supports can help minimize the impact that trauma can have on school functioning, while supporting the development of skills that help students manage current and future stress. Although work in

schools can be extraordinarily rewarding, staff may also feel overwhelmed when trying to find the best ways to support students who have experienced trauma and stress. This book highlights some of the common challenges experienced by school mental health providers, offering strategies to employ before implementing a mental health intervention and describing special considerations for the school context. This book can help providers know where to start (if they have never implemented school-based trauma interventions before), and it offers additional strategies to enhance the efforts of experienced providers. We hope the material herein will guide and support school mental health providers as they engage in the important work of supporting students who have experienced trauma.