Understanding Developmental Trauma

- Caused by prolonged adverse childhood experience (ACEs)
- Common ACEs: maltreatment, violence, abuse, sexual abuse, neglect
- Examples: physical, sexual, emotional abuse, incest, molestation, severe bullying, witnessing domestic violence, insecure attachment to caregivers caused by mental illness, substance abuse, criminal involvement, and sudden separation from or dramatic loss of caregiver or loved ones
- According to Child Protective Services (2011): 78.5% suffered neglect, 17.6% suffered physical abuse, and 9.1% suffered sexual abuse
- The National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence reports 46.3% suffered physical assault, 10.2% experienced child maltreatment, 6.1% experienced sexual victimization, and 25.3% witnessed domestic abuse
- Increased risk for: depression, substance abuse, obesity, social problems like teen pregnancy, experiencing domestic violence as an adult, and having difficulty managing emotions, relationships, and self-esteem
- Areas of occupation/performance that can be negatively impacted by trauma include: work, education, home management, leisure, money management, task initiation, self-confidence, coping skills, stress management, and interpersonal relationships, decision-making, judgment, problem solving, and direction following
- Best intervention: develop a supportive parent-child relationship to help the child feel safe, nurtured, and develop resilience

The Role of OT in Trauma Informed Care

- Recognize the signs of trauma
- Create safe and supportive environments
- Treat children who have experienced trauma
- Work on managing emotions for the adults who care for children who have experienced trauma
- Work with children who experienced trauma and their caregivers to develop skills and techniques avoid crisis

Importance of the ARC Framework

- The Attachment, Self-regulation, and Competency Framework (ARC) was adopted by TVC to help treat children and caregivers who have experienced trauma
- ARC focuses on building self-monitoring skills when working with caregivers and their children to help them challenge their typical response to a negative situation in order to hopefully have a better outcome than what has happened in the past
- ARC stresses the importance of thinking systemically about trauma-informed care in order to build support and safety within the child’s environment

References

Educating Parents and Staff on Trauma-Informed Care

Bridget Welsh, OTD/S

Tennessee Voices for Children

TVC’s Mission

Tennessee Voices for Children provides leadership, support, and services that promote voice, hope, and empowerment for the emotional and behavioral well-being of children, youth, and their families.

Needs of TVC

- Educational materials for caregivers regarding the effects of trauma on children
- Community resources for staff and caregivers
- Family Connections Program brochure
- A condensed manual describing the ARC Framework and how to implement ARC into current programs

Goals of the Experiential Component

- Create evidence-based educational materials related to trauma-informed care that will benefit both caregivers and staff
- Create a thorough, organized research guide that is easily accessible to caregivers and staff
- Create folders that include resources, helpful handouts, and parenting tips that caregivers receive upon intake
- Learn more about mental health through research and client and family interactions
- Gain skills in interviewing clients and working with families while remaining client-centered throughout the process

About the Family Connection Program

- To participate, a child must have: a diagnosed emotional, behavioral, or mental health disorder and impaired functioning at home, school, and the community
- Provides interventions to help stabilize the child’s placement with his or her family and/or allow reunification with the family if the child is stepping down from a higher level of care
- The family receives weekly in-home visits from a family support specialist
- The child receives weekly visits from a Youth and Family Therapist
- The goal of this program is to identify the family and child’s strengths and needs, connect the family with services, and build necessary skills to allow the youth to thrive at home, at school, and in the community

Learning Activities Completed with other TVC Programs

- Participated in the Youth Screen Program where my duties included: analyzing results from screen and conducting clinical interviews with teens who were at risk of suicide, making recommendations for appropriate services for at-risk teens, and debriefing with teens after completing the screen
- Worked with the Early Childhood Program to create an occupation-based newsletter related to self-regulation in the classroom for teachers around Tennessee
- Attended multiple conferences and networking events related to suicide prevention, trauma, and adverse childhood experiences
- Took part in a mental health awareness video created by Tennessee Voices for Children

Deliverables/Outcomes

- Caregiver Handout
  - Researched trauma-informed care to create a handout that explained the complexity of developmental trauma and how to work with children who have experienced it
  - Researched tips for developing advocacy skills when working with a team to treat children who have experienced trauma
  - Met with caregivers to explain the handout, discuss their children and experiences, and answer questions about trauma and managing it

- ARC Manual
  - Created a condensed, user-friendly manual to explain ARC
  - Allows staff to read and understand the framework in order to better incorporate it into existing programs

- Resource Guide and Intake Folders
  - Created comprehensive resource guide for Middle Tennessee
  - Designed Family Connections Program brochure
  - Researched helpful, simple handouts that provide parenting tips and other helpful information for caregivers
  - Created intake folders that include: resource guides, Family Connections brochure, and handouts

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- Every individual I had the opportunity to work with in various programs at Tennessee Voices for Children who took the time to teach me more about mental health and how to make a difference in the lives of children and families who need it the most