

# EMBEDDING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE PRACTICES INTO SPECIAL EDUCATION PERSONNEL PREPARATION PROGRAMS

**Catherine Corr**

*Ph.D, Department of Special Education, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (USA)*

## **Abstract**

Children with disabilities experience trauma (i.e., neglect) at alarming rates. There is a critical need to provide interdisciplinary trauma-informed care (TIC) for children with disabilities, however, many special education professionals are unprepared to implement TIC practices. Trauma-informed care (TIC) utilizes an understanding of how the effects of trauma impact both physical and mental health. Participants will be introduced to key elements of TIC, ways to use those principles in their pre-service special education teacher preparation programs, and how pre-service special education teacher education programs can move towards a trauma-informed framework. This poster is relevant for faculty or other professionals who prepare teachers, specifically special education teachers. This poster will focus on how one program at the [name of university] is maximizing the value of pre-service special education teacher programs to ensure that children and families who have experienced trauma are at the core of their work. This poster will provide examples of how TIC principles have been embedded into existing evidence-based programming for children and families. The poster will also discuss how pre-service professionals across disciplines consider TIC principles and how these principles intersect with the primary goals of their professional role. Finally, this poster will highlight the importance of working across disciplines support children with disabilities in educational settings.

**Keywords:** *Trauma informed care, special education, early childhood, teacher preparation.*

---

## **1. Objectives**

Trauma negatively impacts young children's development. One way to mitigate the impact is through trauma-informed care. Studies that have examined the experiences of ECSE professionals related to trauma-informed care have found they do not feel prepared to implement trauma-informed care. Research shows that children who receive trauma-informed supports have better outcomes, and the need for a well-trained workforce is an essential feature of providing trauma-informed care. Therefore, ECSE teachers play an important role in creating this environment and need to understand trauma and trauma-informed care in order to better support children in their classrooms. First, this poster will focus on enhancing pre-service preparation programs with TIC strategies. By doing so, future early care and education professionals will feel confident and competent in supporting children and families who have experienced trauma. Second, TIC strategies are intended to enhance current practices, with the goal of better supporting children who have experienced trauma. Children who have experienced trauma are more likely to display developmental delays in all areas of functioning, and therefore will work with ECSE providers in multiple settings. Finally, TIC strategies align well with DEC practices. By incorporating TIC strategies with the DEC recommended practices, we will provide examples of ways soon-to-be- ECSE teachers can support children who have experienced trauma. Participants in this poster session will be introduced to the reported knowledge base of ECSE teachers related to trauma-informed care. First, participants will understand the current areas of knowledge related to trauma-informed care and areas of professional development. Additionally, participants will learn about reported barriers and facilitators in implementing trauma-informed care.

## **2. Children with disabilities**

Young children experience trauma at high rates, and children with disabilities are at a greater risk of experiencing it. This content will help ECSE professionals design and implement teacher preparation and professional development opportunities about trauma-informed care, which in turn will increase the quality of care that children with disabilities receive.

## **3. Project Ti3**

By attending this poster, participants will learn about the reported knowledge base of ECSE teachers related to trauma-informed care, including content they know, areas they want to learn more about, and training experiences related to trauma-informed care. By understanding this, teacher preparation courses and professional development opportunities can be tailored to meet these gaps, which in turn increases the quality of care that children who have experienced trauma will receive.

This poster is relevant for faculty who prepare ECSE professionals and is intended to highlight areas of professional development related to trauma-informed care. Trauma-informed care principles can be used to enhance evidence-based teaching for children in ECSE classrooms. Additionally, it is relevant for practitioners as they will learn what type of content should be included in professional development opportunities related to trauma-informed care.