

# Trauma-Sensitive School Checklist

**Lesley University**  
Center for Special Education

**Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative**  
of Massachusetts Advocates for Children  
and the Legal Services Center of Harvard Law School

This checklist is organized by five components involved in creating a trauma-sensitive school. Each component consists of several elements. Please assess your school on each element according to the following scale:

- 1** Element is **not at all** in place
- 2** Element is **partially** in place
- 3** Element is **mostly** in place
- 4** Element is **fully** in place

School \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Team Members (name and position)

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A trauma-sensitive school is a safe and respectful environment that enables students to build caring relationships with adults and peers, self-regulate their emotions and behaviors, and succeed academically, while supporting their physical health and well-being.

## School-wide Policies and Practices

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- School contains predictable and safe environments (including classrooms, hallways, playgrounds, and school bus) that are attentive to transitions and sensory needs.
- Leadership (including principal and/or superintendent) develops and implements a trauma-sensitive action plan, identifies barriers to progress, and evaluates success.
- General and special educators consider the role that trauma may be playing in learning difficulties at school.
- Discipline policies balance accountability with an understanding of trauma.
- Support for staff is available on a regular basis, including supervision and/or consultation with a trauma expert, classroom observations, and opportunities for team work.
- Opportunities exist for confidential discussion about students.
- School participates in safety planning, including enforcement of court orders, transferring records safely, restricting access to student-record information, and sensitive handling of reports of suspected incidents of abuse or neglect.
- On-going professional development opportunities occur as determined by staff needs assessments.

## Classroom Strategies and Techniques

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- Expectations are communicated in clear, concise, and positive ways, and goals for achievement of students affected by traumatic experiences are consistent with the rest of the class.
- Students' strengths and interests are encouraged and incorporated.
- Activities are structured in predictable and emotionally safe ways.
- Opportunities exist for students to learn and practice regulation of emotions and modulation of behaviors.
- Classrooms employ positive supports for behavior.
- Information is presented and learning is assessed using multiple modes.
- Opportunities exist for learning how to interact effectively with others.
- Opportunities exist for learning how to plan and follow through on assignments.

## Collaborations and Linkages with Mental Health

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- Policies describe how, when, and where to refer families for mental health supports; and staff actively facilitate and follow through in supporting families' access to trauma-competent mental health services.
- Access exists to trauma-competent services for prevention, early intervention, treatment, and crisis intervention.
- Protocols exist for helping students transition back to school from other placements.
- Mental health services are linguistically appropriate and culturally competent.
- Staff has regular opportunities for assistance from mental health providers in responding appropriately and confidentially to families.

## Family Partnerships

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- Staff uses a repertoire of skills to actively engage and build positive relationships with families.
- Strategies to involve parents are tailored to meet individual family needs, and include flexibility in selecting times and places for meetings, availability of interpreters, and translated materials.
- All communications with and regarding families respect the bounds of confidentiality.

## Community Linkages

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- School develops and maintains ongoing partnerships with state human service agencies and with community-based agencies to facilitate access to resources.
- When possible, school and community agencies leverage funding to increase the array of supports available.