

Building Better Youth Outcomes: The Importance of Being Trauma-Informed

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2022 CHILD PROTECTION COURT AD LITEM SEMINAR

KERRVILLE, TEXAS





Welcome

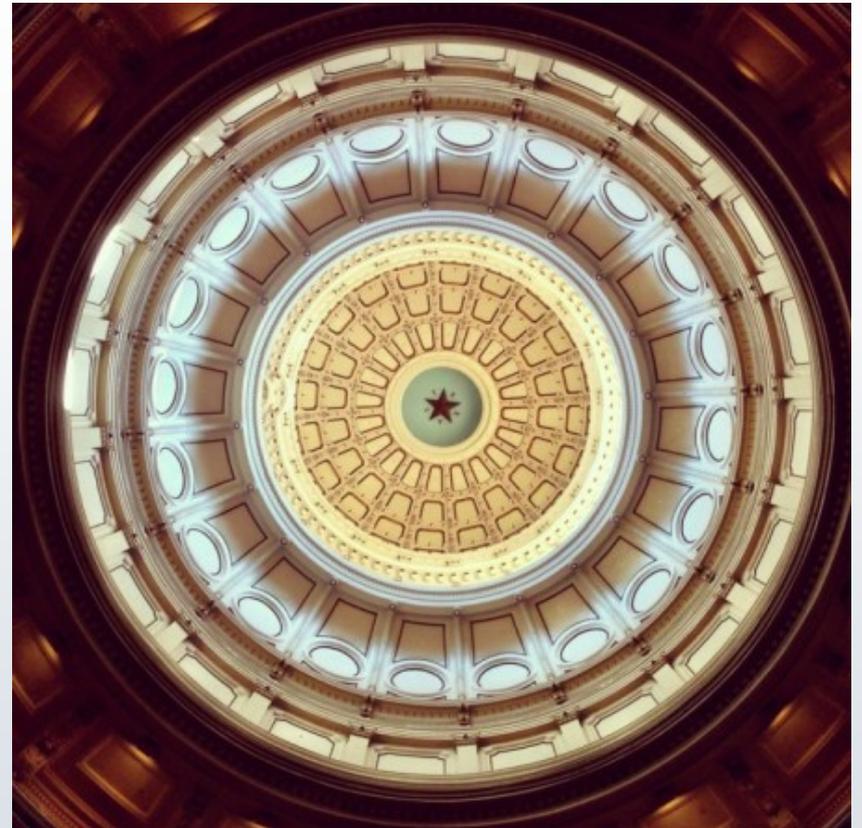
Kaela Settle singing “This is Me” on the Graham Norton show

<https://youtu.be/TqKbKp0ZoNI?t=14>



Texas 87th Legislative Session

- Texas Family Code Sec. 107.004
- New CLE requirement for attorneys
- Attorneys who represent children
- Effective Sept. 1, 2021
- 3 hours of education annually
- Trauma-Informed Care



Learning Objectives



Describe what Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is;



Explain why TIC principles are important to your clients; and



Demonstrate trauma-informed methods of practice.



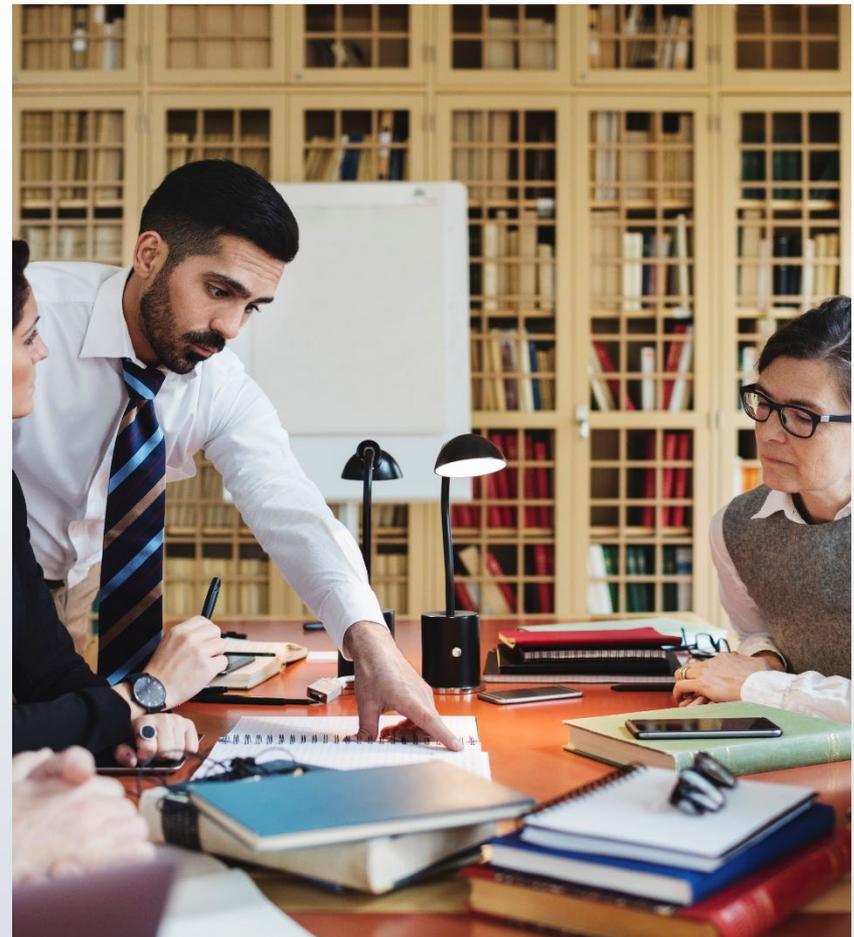
A Case Study: Buddy Gonzalez

- Mr. Smith and Ms. Gonzalez were having dinner at their home in Austin, Texas and were watching the news. Ms. Gonzalez' 3 children were home, Cherish (14), Buddy (10) and her newborn child, Darla. Darla is the only child of Mr. Smith.
- Mr. Smith was recently laid off from his job and Ms. Gonzalez had to leave her job a year ago to care for her children and home-school them.
- The news about Covid and Afghanistan has been running constantly in the home. Mr. Smith served in the Army and so he was constantly watching the developing news feed.
- When the dinner was served Mr. Smith allegedly was upset with the quality and lateness of the dinner.
- Allegedly, Mr. Smith and Ms. Gonzalez were loudly shouting such that the neighbors called 911.
- When the cops arrived, Ms. Gonzalez was in the kitchen, crying and had a red mark on her cheek, red dots in her eyes and marks around her neck. When interviewing Mr. Smith, he smelled of alcohol and there was an acidic odor in the home. Mr. Smith was fidgeting, had scratch marks on his arms and face, and had a hard time focusing. The home was in disarray. Cherish and Buddy were in their rooms and their eyes were red. Buddy had a red mark on his cheek and Cherish's blouse was ripped.



Case Scenario Discussion

- Was anything traumatic here?
- How can you reduce trauma impact?
- Child's attorney work prior to first hearing
- Parent's attorney work prior to first hearing
- How can you make trauma worse for clients?



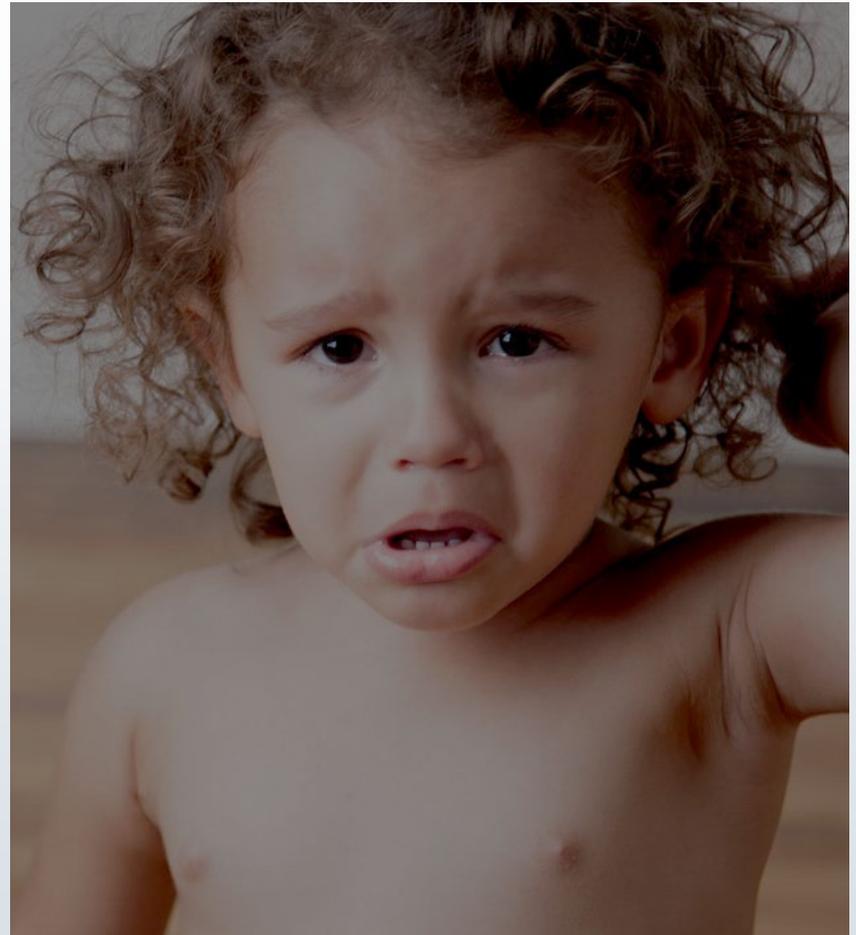
Describe what Trauma-Informed Care is?

Trauma-Informed Care Definition

- TX Reg. – Handout 1

Statutory requirement for training

- TX Fam. Code – Handout 2



Texas Adopted Definition of Trauma & Trauma-Informed under

TRAUMA

Results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life-threatening with lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning or the individual's mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

TRAUMA-INFORMED

- Realizing the widespread impact of trauma
- Recognizing the signs and symptoms of trauma
- Maximizing physical and psychological safety
- Building healthy, trusting relationships that create mutuality
- Striving to avoid re-traumatization

[Texas Administrative Code Section 702.201](#)



Good News!



It might seem like trauma does irreversible damage to your brain--that's not true. Our brains are extremely adaptable. Neuroplasticity, the brain's ability to form new connections, explains how we can rewire our brains to reverse trauma's damaging effects.

Research indicates with appropriate supports and interventions people can overcome traumatic experiences.



Who Needs To Be Trauma-Informed?



Everyone who works with children and families who may have experienced trauma, including:

Child welfare professionals and advocates

Judges who hear child and family cases

Child welfare and juvenile justice professionals

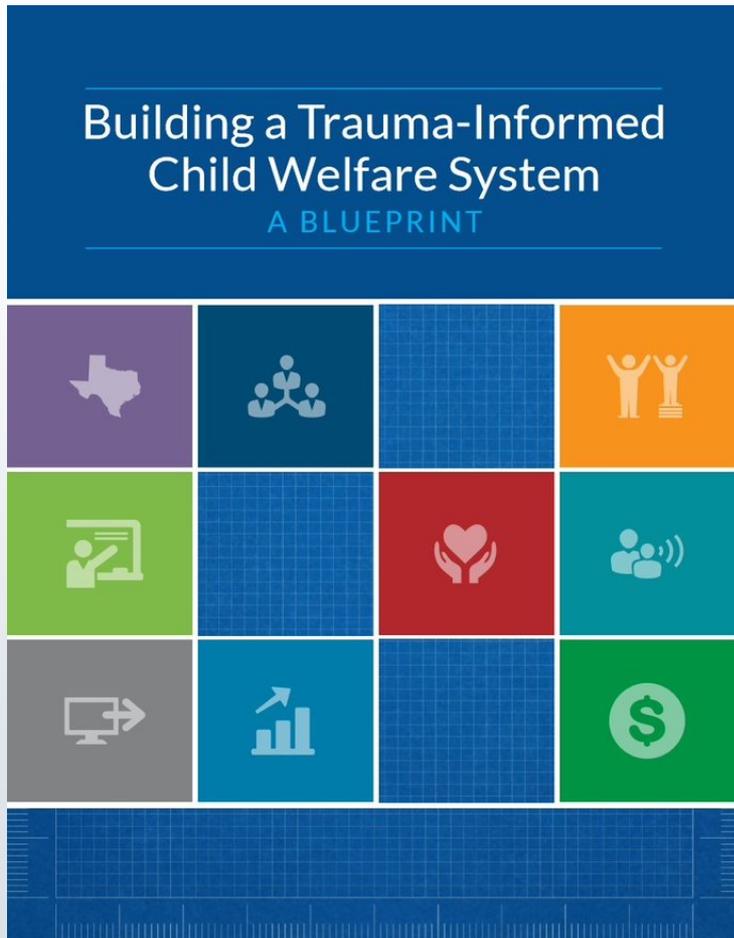
Teachers and school personnel

Doctors, nurses, and clinic staff

Mental and behavioral health professionals



Building a Trauma-Informed Texas



- Statewide Collaborative on Trauma-Informed Care (SCTIC) formed, 2017
- Released Blueprint, 2019
- SCTIC Implementation Task Force formed, 2019
- Trauma-Informed landing page launched, 2021
- Judicial Trauma Institute hosted, 2021
- Project TIC Courts, 2022



Elements of Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004

- Symptoms and Impact of Trauma
- Attachment
- Role of Trauma-Informed Services (Build Healing)
- Screening
- Re-traumatization
- Services and Advocacy





Symptoms and Impact of Trauma

Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(1)



Three Realms of ACEs

<https://www.pacesconnection.com/blog/3-realms-of-aces-updated>

Figure 1. Distribution of ACE scores among Texas adults, BRFSS 2015

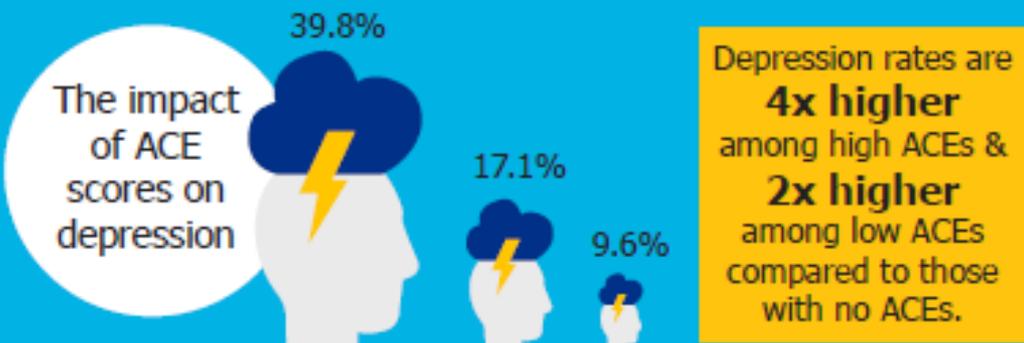
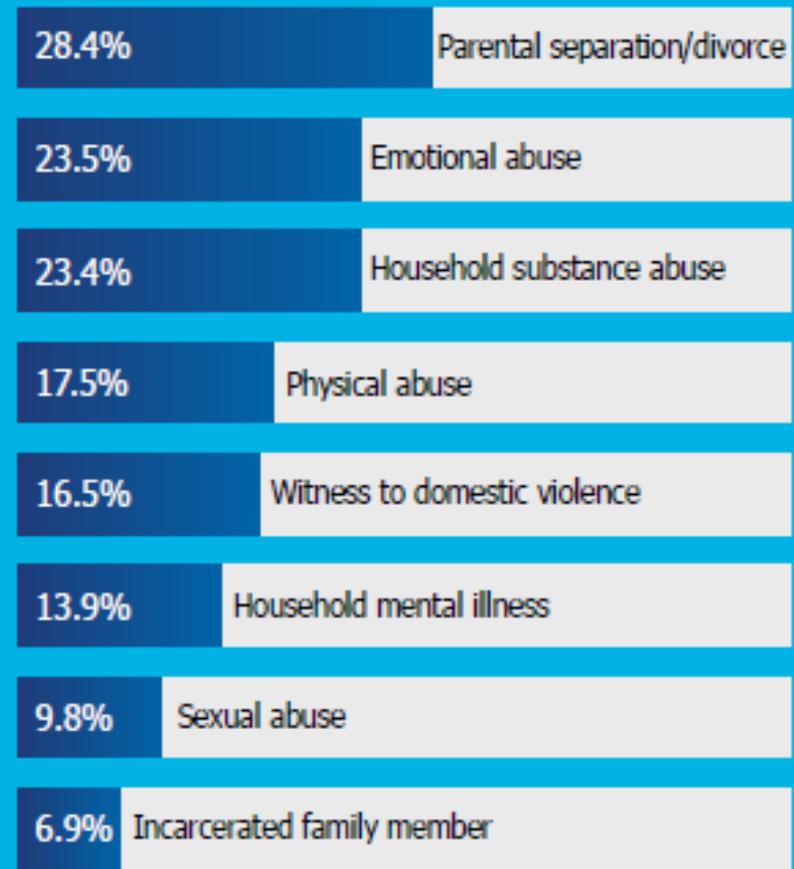


Figure 2. Prevalence of ACEs by type, BRFSS 2015

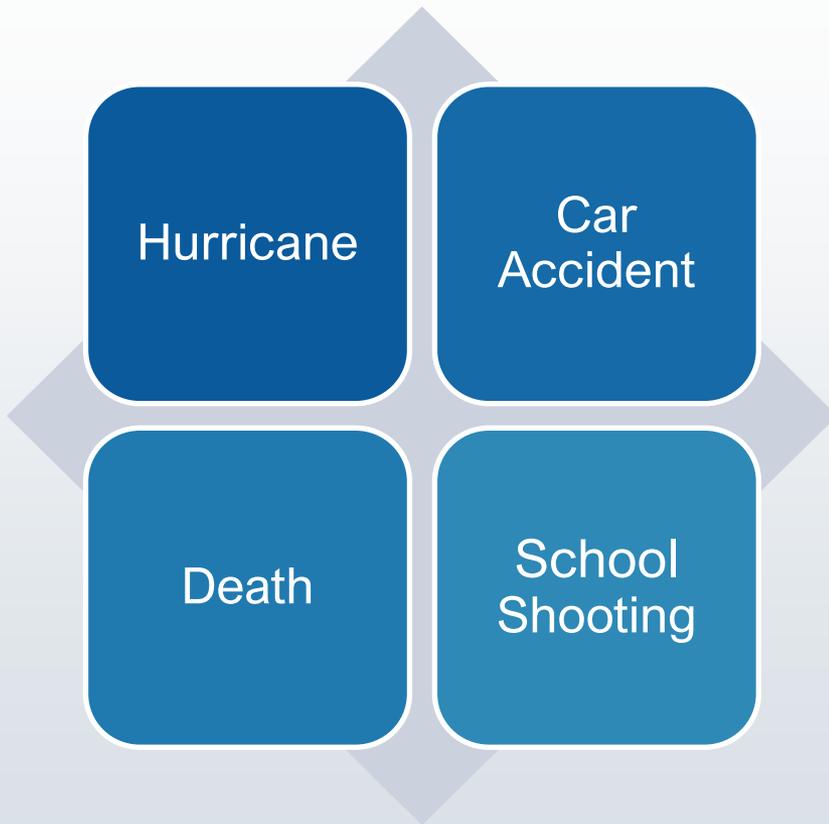


ACEs Prevalence in Texas

<https://www.dshs.texas.gov/chs/brfss/attachments/March-2019-Data-Brief.pdf>

Types of Traumas

Acute Trauma



Chronic Trauma





Video: The Biology of Toxic Stress

Excerpt from the Documentary “Resilience”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z4CD6jyWw2A>

Symptoms of Trauma

Affects on:

- Child Development
- Emotions
- Memories
- Behavior
- Self-Regulation &
- Decision Making



Traumatic responses in clients might look like:



Traumatic responses in clients might look like:

- Perceive that danger is everywhere
- Difficulty belonging and playing well with others
- Impaired self control
- Over-responding or under-responding
- Difficulty regulating after outburst
- Guarded & anxious
- Unable to trust others
- Have difficulty with change & transitions
- Misreading motives, facial expressions, body language
- Chronic or recurrent physical complaints



Why distinguish PTSD from grief?

- **PTSD and grief are not the same thing:**
 - Have different physiological effects and different long-term effects
 - Require different assessment tools/different treatments
- **Grief among youth in foster care can manifest in different ways:**
 - Separation distress (yearning and longing for the person): In children, can look like increased clinginess with caregivers, fearfulness, behavioral regressions; in adolescents, can look like social withdrawal, concerns about “losing others”, not wanting to get close to other people
 - Existential/identity distress (feeling lost without the person or life has no meaning without the person): In children, can look shame or embarrassment that they are “different” than other kids; in adolescents, can look like hopelessness, social withdrawal, risk-taking behaviors
 - Important to note that grief can be prominent in youth in foster care, even if the caregiver was abusive/neglectful



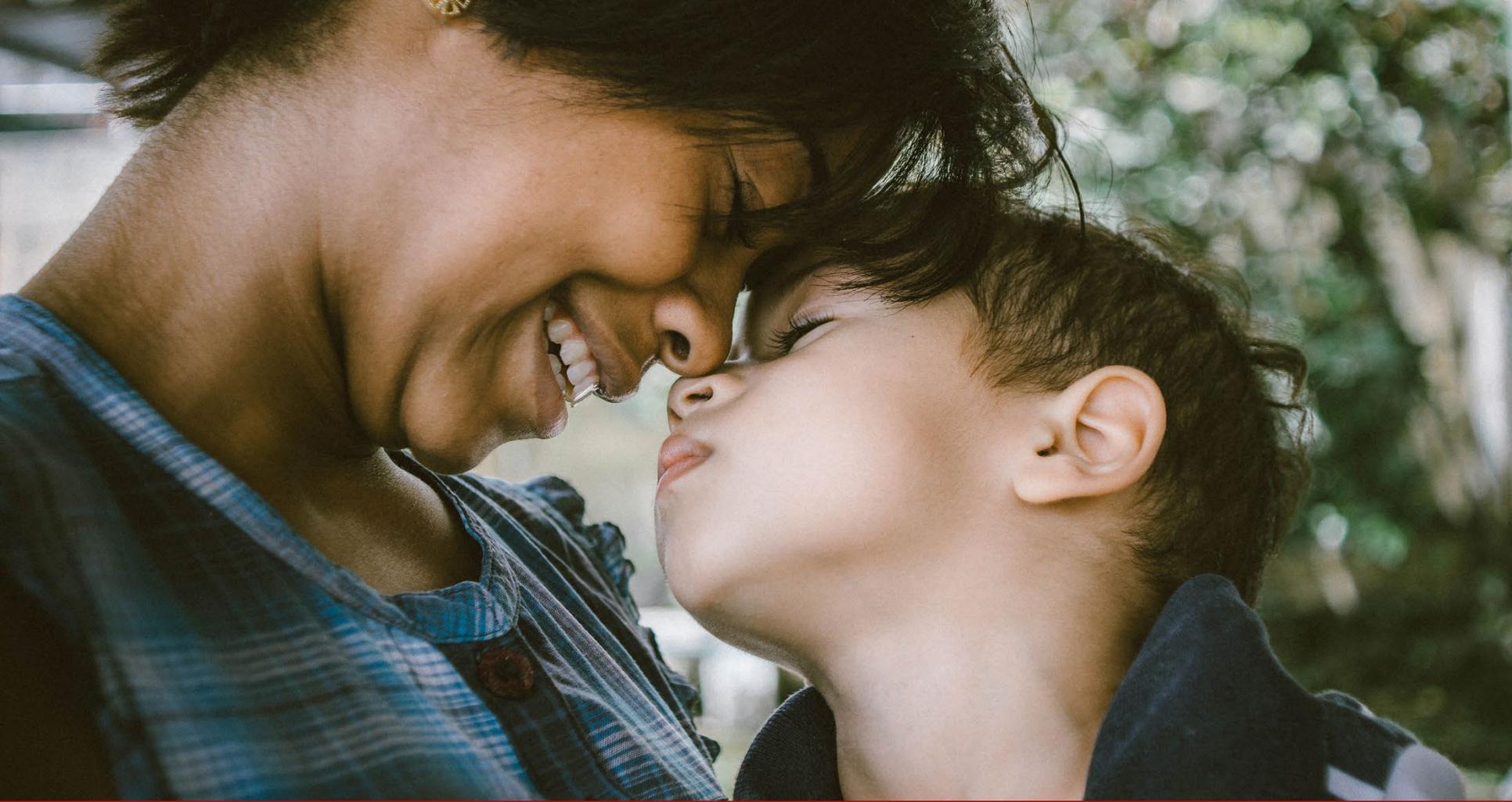


"I have a few questions for you Sam. Is there anything you're worried about?"

Sam thought about it and pictured his dog.

"I miss my dog, Spots!"
He said.





Attachment

Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(2)



Video: Importance of Healthy Attachment

Harvard University Center for the Developing Child

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bF3j5UVCSCA>

Reactive Attachment Disorder (RAD)

WHAT IS IT?

- Non-formation of important caregiver bonds in early childhood.
- Almost exclusively diagnosed between 9 months and 5 years

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- Not smiling
- Being irritable for no reason
- Seeming sad and fearful, especially around caregivers
- Not feeling better when an adult tries to comfort them
- Calming down more easily when left alone
- Not showing interest in or looking at other people around them
- Not reacting when picked up by an adult
- Not laughing or playing interactive games like peek-a-boo



Treatment for RAD

- Therapy for child & family
- Social skills intervention
- Special education services
- Parenting skills classes

Sources:

[Child Mind Institute](#)

[Cleveland Clinic](#)





The Role of Trauma-Informed Services (Build Healing)

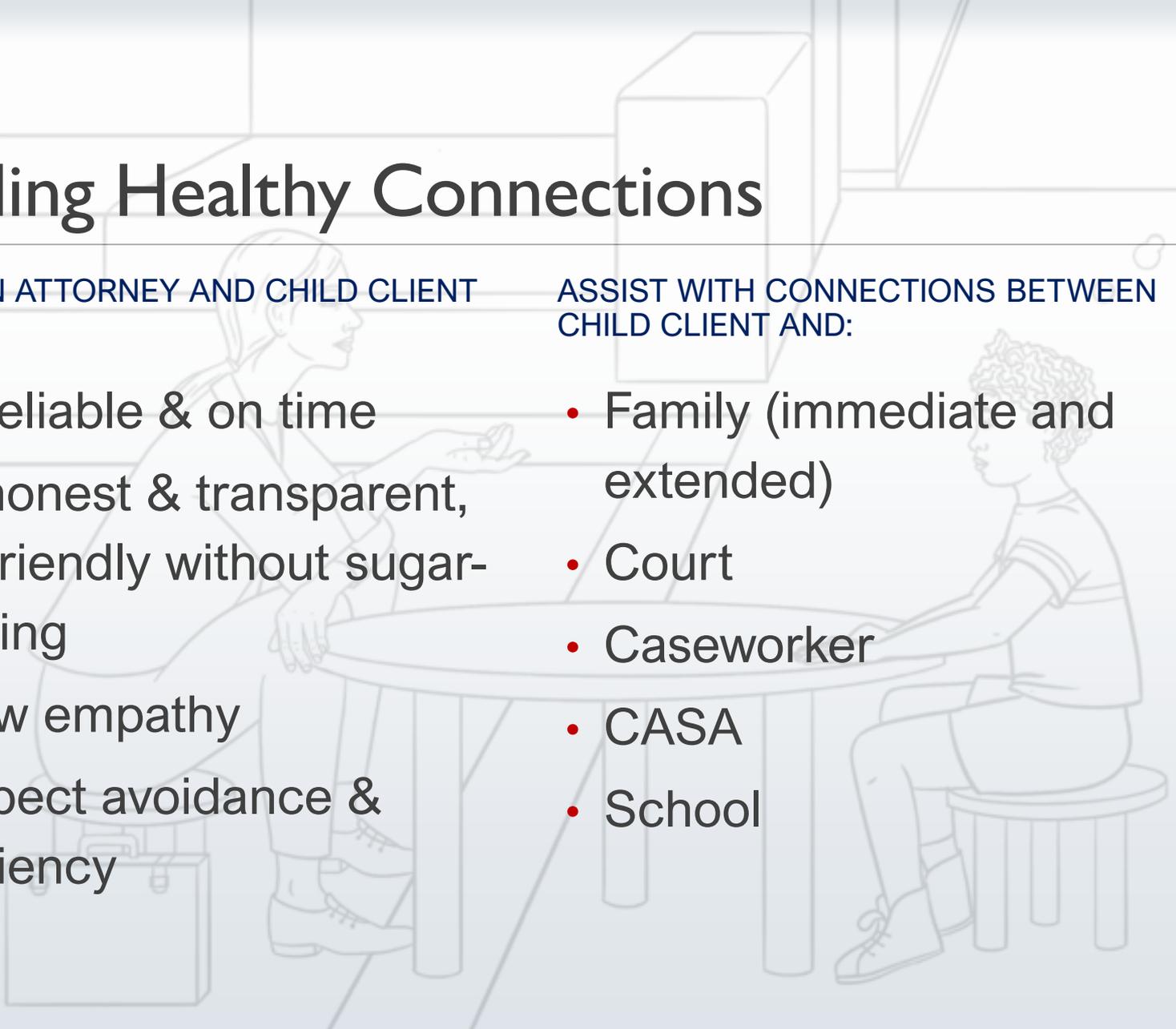
Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(3)

Role of TIC and Evidence-Based Services

- Builds Connection
- Felt Safety
- Positive regulation of emotions
- Build Resiliency
 - To overcome trauma &
 - Adverse Childhood Experiences



Building Healthy Connections



BETWEEN ATTORNEY AND CHILD CLIENT

- Be reliable & on time
- Be honest & transparent, kid friendly without sugar-coating
- Show empathy
- Respect avoidance & resiliency

ASSIST WITH CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHILD CLIENT AND:

- Family (immediate and extended)
- Court
- Caseworker
- CASA
- School



Examples of Evidence Based Services to Address Trauma & Build Healing



- **Trauma Focused-Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TFCBT)**

- Primarily focused on adults
- Improve child PTSD, depressive, & anxiety symptoms
- Enhance parent-child communication, attachment & safety



- **Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)**

- Validated for adults; Well Supported in child & adolescent
- Utilize eye movement and external stimulation



- **Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT)**

- Validated for children age 2-7
- Build close relationships between parent & child



Examples of Evidence Based Services to Address Trauma & Build Healing cont.

- 
- **Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT)**
 - Validated for use with children and adolescents
 - Understanding and accepting reality of traumatic event; reduce avoidance

- 
- **Prolonged Exposure (PE)**
 - Validated for adolescents (PE-A) and adults
 - Promote ability to process and diminish symptoms



Examples of Evidence Based Services to Address Trauma & Build Healing cont.

- 
- **Trust Based Relational Intervention (TBRI) for Caregivers**
 - For caregivers of children 0-17; Promising Research Evidence
 - Improve caregiver capacity to support mental health of children & youth

- 
- **Trauma-Grief Component Therapy (TGCT-A)**
 - For children 12-20; Promising Research Evidence
 - Reduce PTSD, depression, maladaptive grief, improve school behavior

Resource:

The California Evidence-based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare:

<https://www.cebc4cw.org/>





Screening

Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(4)

Screening and Assessments



- Screen appropriately for trauma
- Avoid mislabeling trauma as a mental health disorder
- Avoid medication when non-pharmaceutical intervention is appropriate



Assessments Used by DFPS

TEXAS CHILD & ADOLESCENT NEEDS & STRENGTHS (CANS) 2.0 ASSESSMENT

- Children ages 3-17 in TMC must receive w/in 30 days & annually
- Trauma-informed behavioral health evaluation
- Now available via telehealth for initial and annual CANS

FAMILY STRENGTHS AND NEEDS (FSNA) ASSESSMENT

- Caseworker must complete by 21st day post-removal
- Assess family functioning & strengths to aid in FPS development
- Used to assist initial CANS assessment



Other Assessments

- Psychological Evaluation
- ACEs Screening
- Commercial Sexual Exploitation Identification (CSE-IT) Tool
- Juvenile Justice Tools
 - GAINS
 - MAYSI-2
 - PACT





Avoiding Re-Traumatization

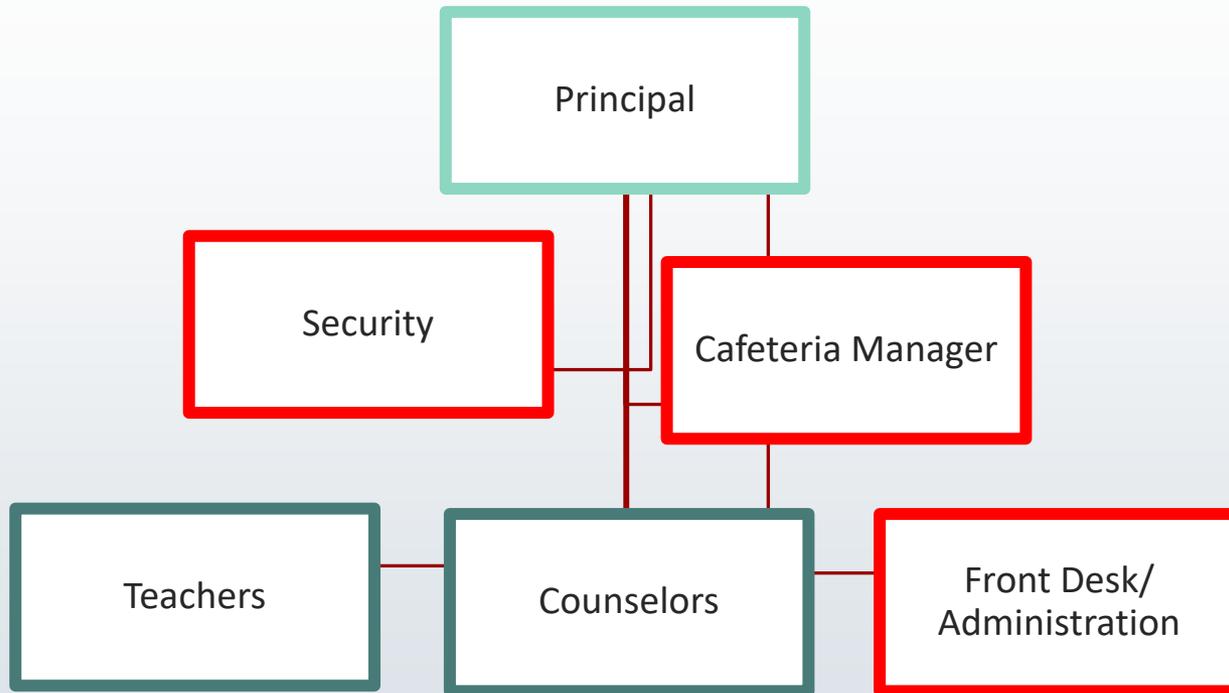
Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(5)

System Re-traumatization

- Child Welfare System
- Juvenile Justice System
- Family Court System
- Mental Health System
- Education System
- Medical System



A Systems Approach



Without a Trauma Lens

Responding to
Behaviors of
Individuals with
Traumatic Responses
Might Look Like:

- Raised or sarcastic voices
- Belittling them
- Accusing them of not caring
- Suspending them
- Suspending “family time”
- Harsher penalties
- Resetting or delaying proceedings or appointments
- Holding in Contempt:
 - grab, cuff, jail, or detain



Environmental Changes

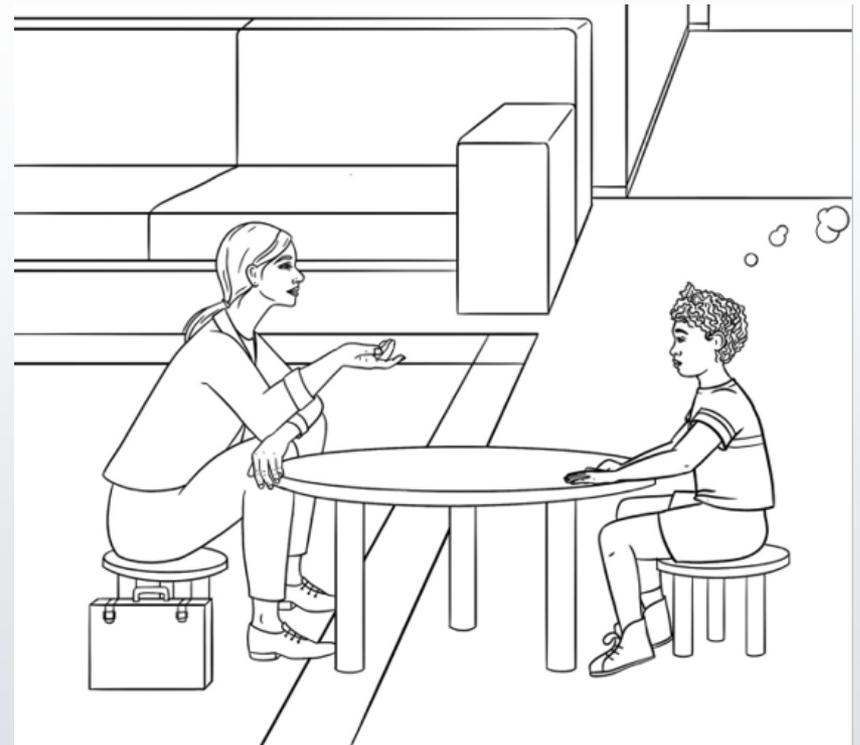


- Signage welcoming and understandable
- Lobby atmosphere
- Courtroom atmosphere
- Kid friendly, if appropriate



Your Responsibility in Reducing Trauma

- Meet in their space
- Get down on their level;
Make eye contact, as appropriate
- Explain what is happening
- Be thoughtful about note taking
- Notice & validate feelings
- Offer breaks



Community Collaboration

- No one stakeholder can do this alone
- Build relationships in community
- Establish regular collaborative meetings to support implementation
- Leverage community resources





Advocating for Trauma-Informed Services

Tex. Fam. Code § 107.004 (b-4)(6)

When Alex went to court she said to the judge, "Your honor, Sam misses his dog, Spots, very much and he wants to see his Aunt and Uncle. I learned that Spots is living with them."

Then the judge said, "We'll see what we can do about visitation with Sam's aunt, uncle, and dog."

"Spots!"



TIC Resources Tools to Enhance Advocacy



Availability of Trauma-Informed Services

Superior Health Plan STAR Health resources

- Main site: www.fostercaretx.com
- Find a provider sites
 - <https://www.fostercaretx.com/for-members/find-a-provider.html>
 - <https://findaprovider.fostercaretx.com/location>
- **Service Management team**
 - Assists caseworkers with TIC provider location



Children's Commission Resources

www.TraumaInformedTexas.com

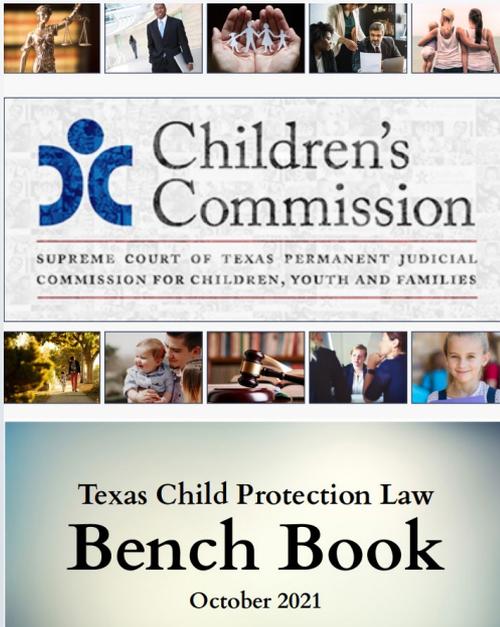
- Trauma-Informed Blueprint
- Definitions adopted into TAC
- Role-specific training resource pages
- 2021 Judicial Trauma Institute replays & materials (CLE credit available)

Welcome to TraumaInformedTexas.com

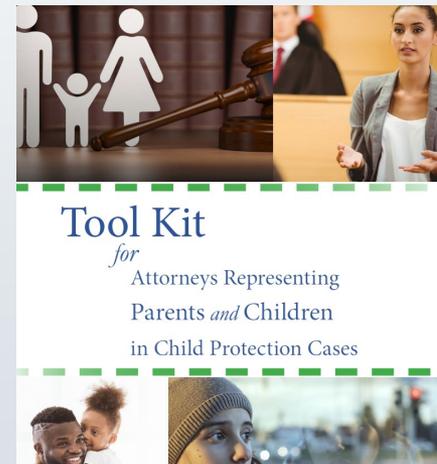


Children's Commission Resources cont.

- Texas Child Protection Law Bench Book, TIC Chapter: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/for-judges/bench-book/>

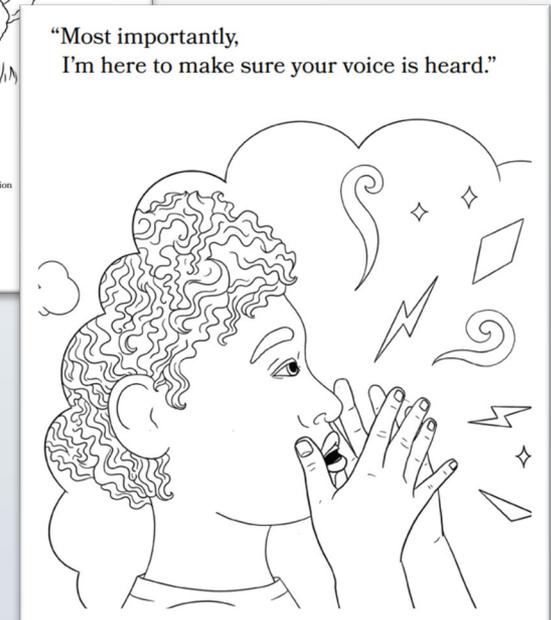
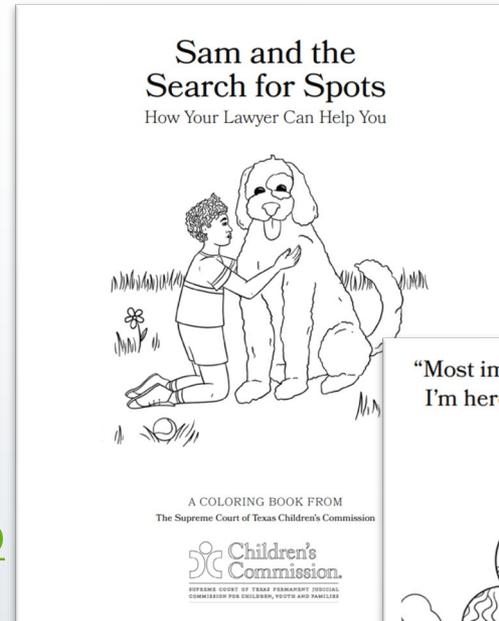


- Tool Kit for Attorneys Representing Parents & Children in CPS Cases: <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/our-work/legal-practice-process/legal-representation-committee/>



Children's Commission Resources cont.

- **Coloring Book: Sam and the Search for Spots – How Your Lawyers Can Help You**
 - [English Version](#)
 - [Spanish Version](#)
 - <http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/our-work/legal-practice-process/legal-representation-committee/>



Additional Resources

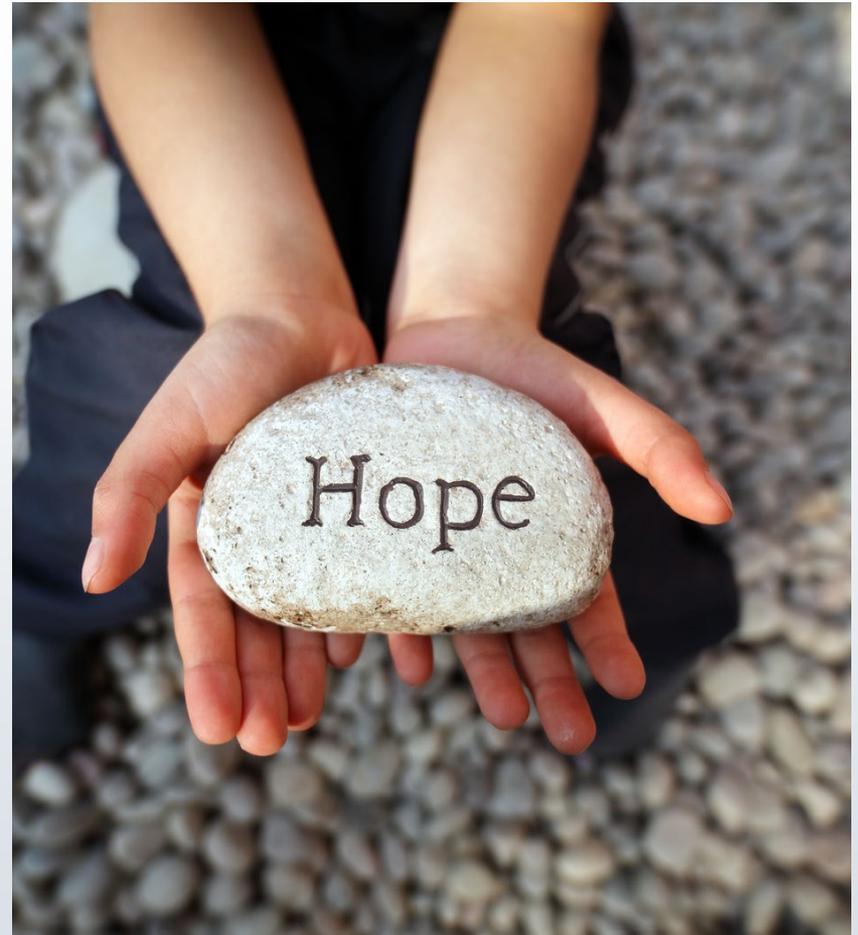
- Child Mind Institute: <https://childmind.org/>
- Harvard Center for the Developing Child:
<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/>
- National Childhood Traumatic Stress Network:
<https://www.nctsn.org/>
- TCU Karyn Purvis Institute for Child Development:
<https://child.tcu.edu/#sthash.9kPeVPAY.dpbs>
- The Hackett Center Trauma and Grief Center:
<https://mmhpi.org/work/trauma-grief-center/>



Worth the Effort

“Our lives depend on hope. If you have hope, you'll be able to overcome problems you face. But if you're without hope, your difficulties will increase. Hope is linked to compassion and loving kindness. In my life, I've faced all sorts of difficulties, but I never gave up hope.”

-Dalai Lama



A Special Thank You To:

- Judge Lynn Tepper Circuit Judge, Retired 6th Judicial Circuit, Pasco County, FL
- Judge Rosie Alvarado, 438th Judicial District Judge, Bexar County, TX
- Dr. Julie Kaplow, The Hackett Center for Mental Health Trauma & Grief Center



Thank you!

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