



Child Maltreatment, Trauma, and Developing a Trauma-Informed School

Bradley Stein, M.D., Ph.D.



Treatment and Services Adaptation Center
for Resiliency, Hope, and Wellness in Schools



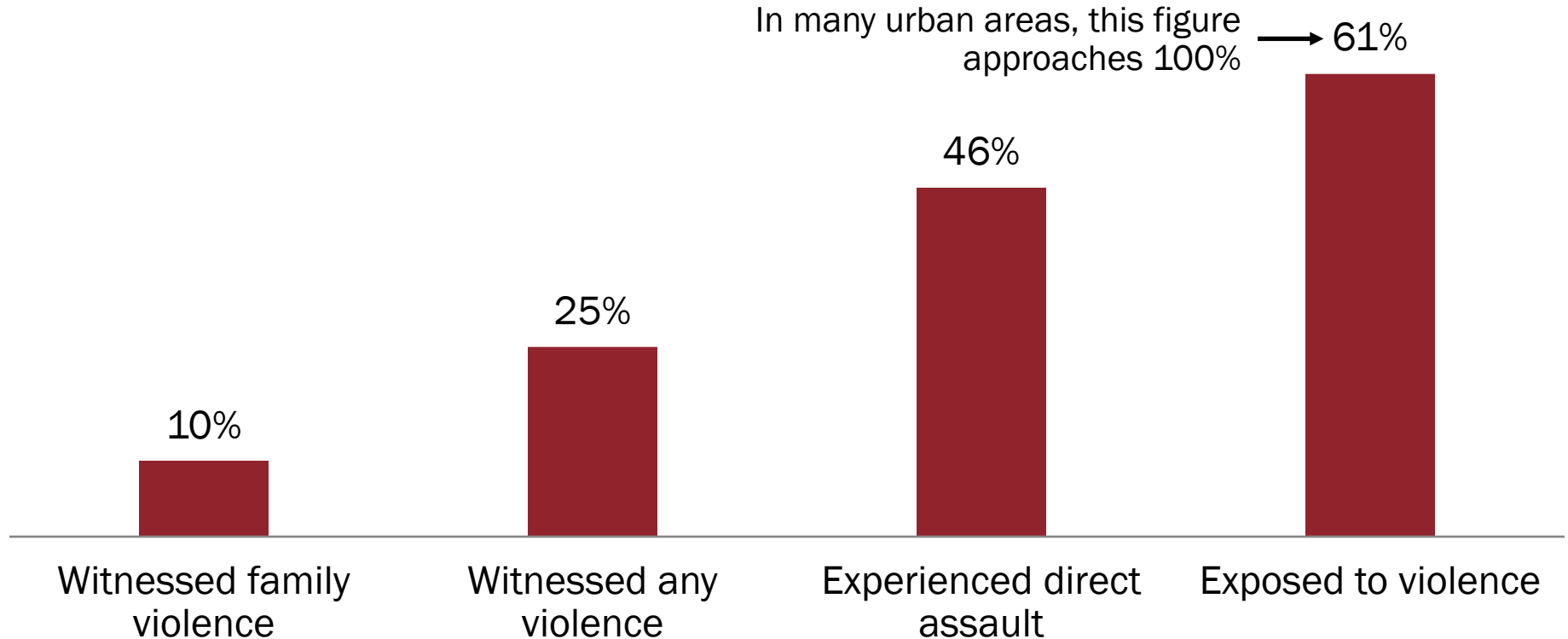
Today's talk

1. Trauma and its effects
2. Why childhood trauma matters in schools
3. Trauma-informed schools
4. Additional considerations

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A startling number of students are exposed to violence and trauma



What is childhood trauma?

“Trauma arises from an inescapable stressful event that overwhelms an individuals’ coping mechanisms.”

—van der Kolk and Fislir, 1995

Childhood trauma is an “experience or witnessing of an event that involves (1) actual or threatened death or serious injury to self or others or (2) threat to psychological or physical integrity of self or others.”

—Zero to Three, 2004

The emotional impact of violence and other trauma can be profound

CHILDREN WHO
EXPERIENCE
TRAUMA ARE
MORE LIKELY TO . .
.

- Develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Experience problems with friends and family
- Develop emotional and behavioral problems
- Perform worse in school

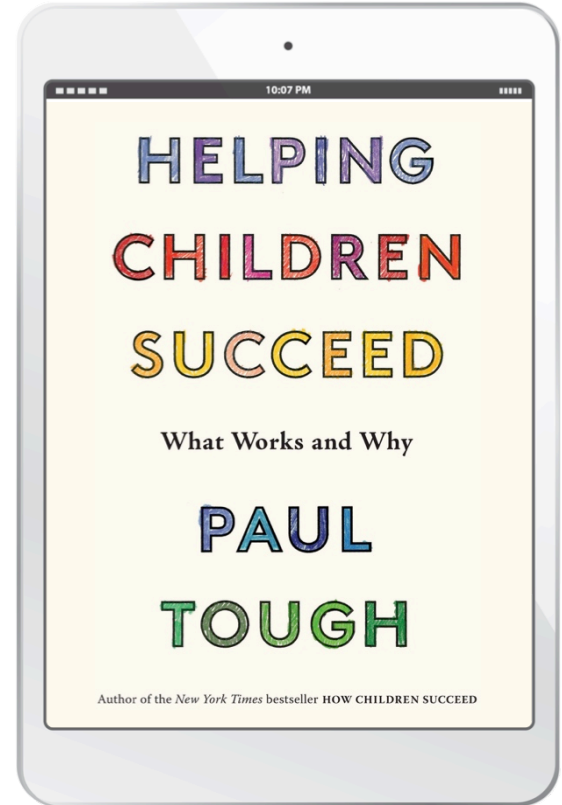
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Childhood trauma affects children's life in school

“ Over the past decade, neuroscientists have determined how severe and chronic stress in childhood leads to physiological and neurological adaptations in children that affect the way their minds and bodies develop **and the way they function in school.** ”

—Paul Tough, 2016



Distress from trauma can lead to problems that impede learning and interpersonal relations

CHILDREN WHO
EXPERIENCE
TRAUMA ARE
MORE LIKELY TO . .

•

- Develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Experience problems with friends and family
- Develop emotional and behavioral problems
 - Substance abuse
 - Aggression
 - Depression
- Perform worse in school

Distress from trauma can cause a decline in classroom performance

CHILDREN WHO
EXPERIENCE
TRAUMA ARE
MORE LIKELY TO . .
.

- Develop posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)
- Experience problems with friends and family
- Develop emotional and behavioral problems
- Perform worse in school
 - Inability to concentrate
 - Flashbacks and preoccupation with the trauma
 - Avoidance of school and other places

Distress from trauma can cause a decline in classroom performance

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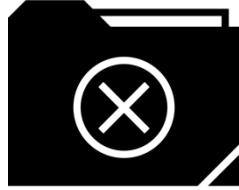
Perform worse in school

- Inability to concentrate
- Flashbacks and preoccupation with the trauma
- Avoidance of school and other places

Trauma experiences take a measurable toll on academic achievement



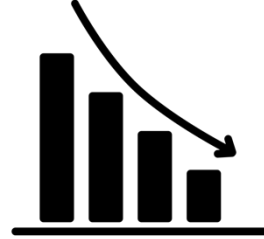
Decreased IQ
and reading
ability



More
suspensions,
expulsions



More days
absent from
school



Lower GPA



Decreased
high-school
graduation
rates

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- 3. Trauma-informed schools**
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Schools are ideal settings for helping children who have experienced trauma



What is a trauma-informed school?



✓ 1. REALIZES the prevalence and impact of trauma

✓ 2. RECOGNIZES signs of trauma and the need for learning supports

✓ 3. RESPONDS to trauma with developmentally appropriate support to enhance student success

✓ 4. RESISTS retraumatization by integrating principles of trauma-informed care into classroom practices and responding to student and staff needs for self-care

There are six key foundations of trauma-informed schools



Safety

Trust and transparency

Peer support

Collaboration and mutuality

Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

There are six key foundations of trauma-informed schools

Safety

Promoting a sense of physical and psychological safety throughout the organization, including understanding how “safety” is defined by those served

Trust and transparency

Peer support

Collaboration and mutuality

Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

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Safety

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Cultural humility

Ensuring that operations and decisions are transparent so that trust is built and maintained within the organization and with those served

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Peer support

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Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

Understanding that peers who have experienced traumatic events are key supports in the trauma recovery and healing of others

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Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

Ensuring that relationships among all parties (e.g., staff to staff, student to staff, parent to staff) are collaborative and that power and decisionmaking are meaningfully shared

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Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

Understanding the history of diminished voices and eliminating power differentials to support choice in goal-setting and cultivate the skill of self-advocacy

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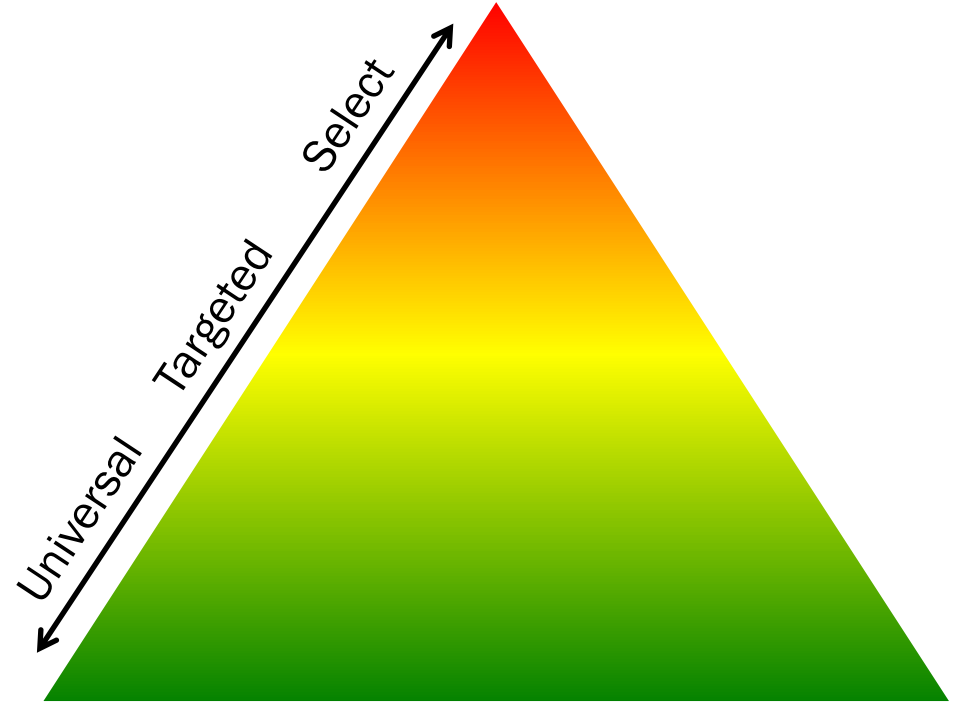
Empowerment, voice, and choice

Cultural humility

Rejecting cultural stereotypes and biases and leveraging access to connections that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of those served

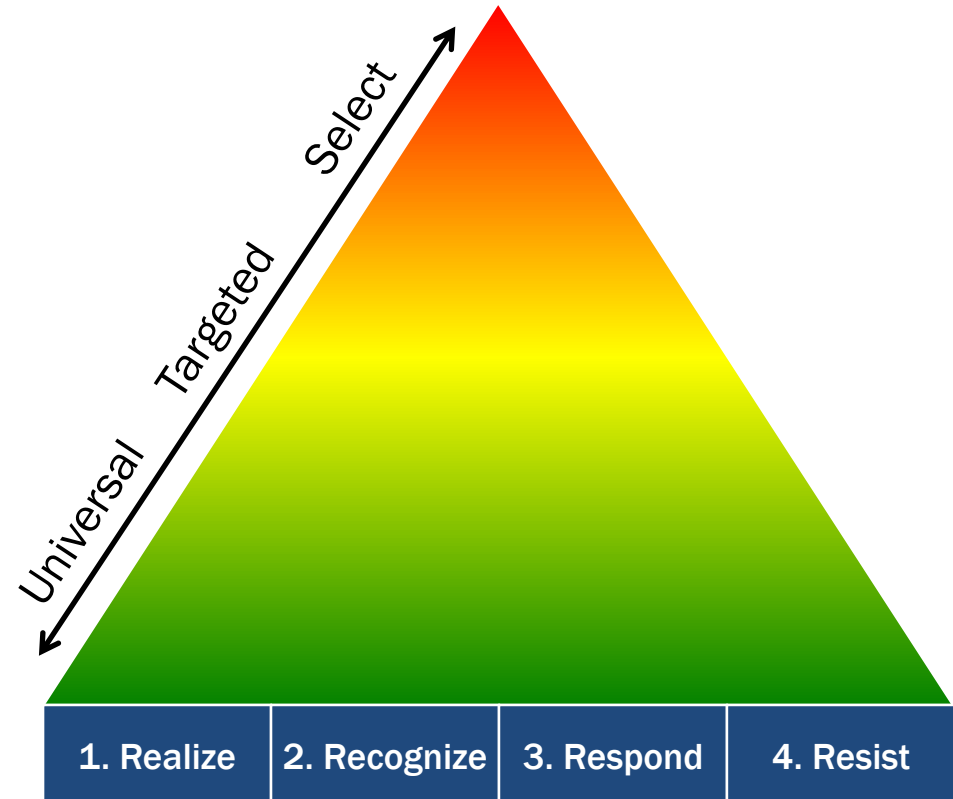
The trauma-informed school is the structure for a range of interventions for traumatized students

- A multitier system of support is a continuum of supports for students that provide a range of service and support intensities



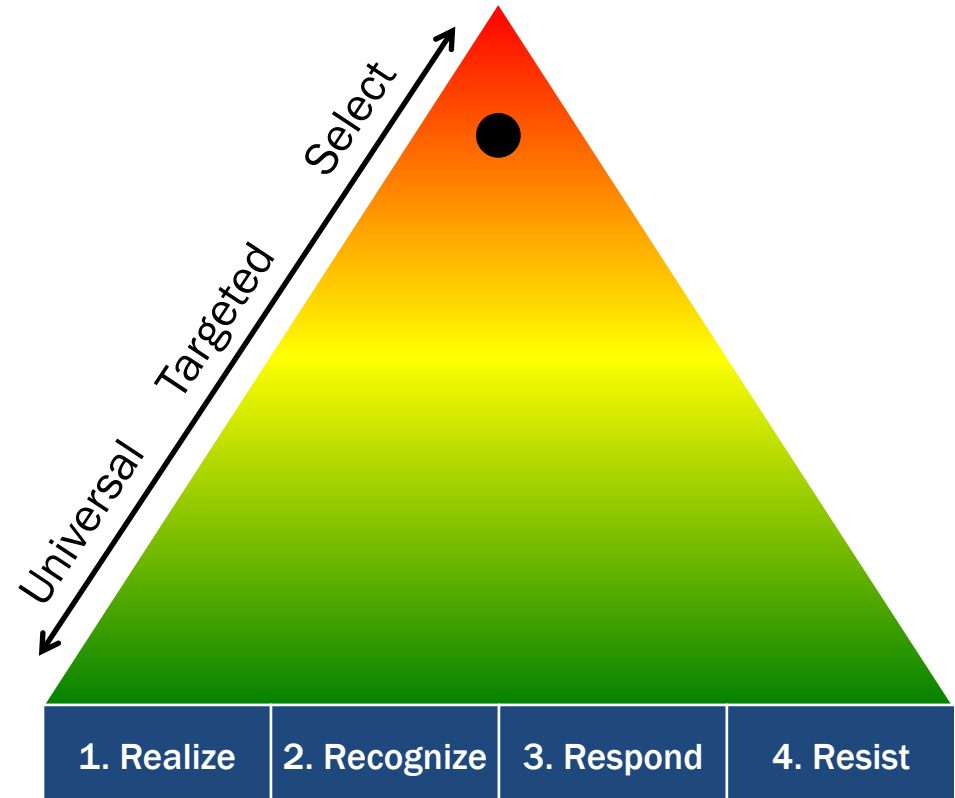
The trauma-informed school is the structure for a range of interventions for traumatized students

- A multitier system of support is a continuum of supports for students that provide a range of service and support intensities
- The system is built to facilitate the four R's:
 1. Realize
 2. Recognize
 3. Respond
 4. Resist



The trauma-informed school is the foundation for a range of interventions for traumatized students

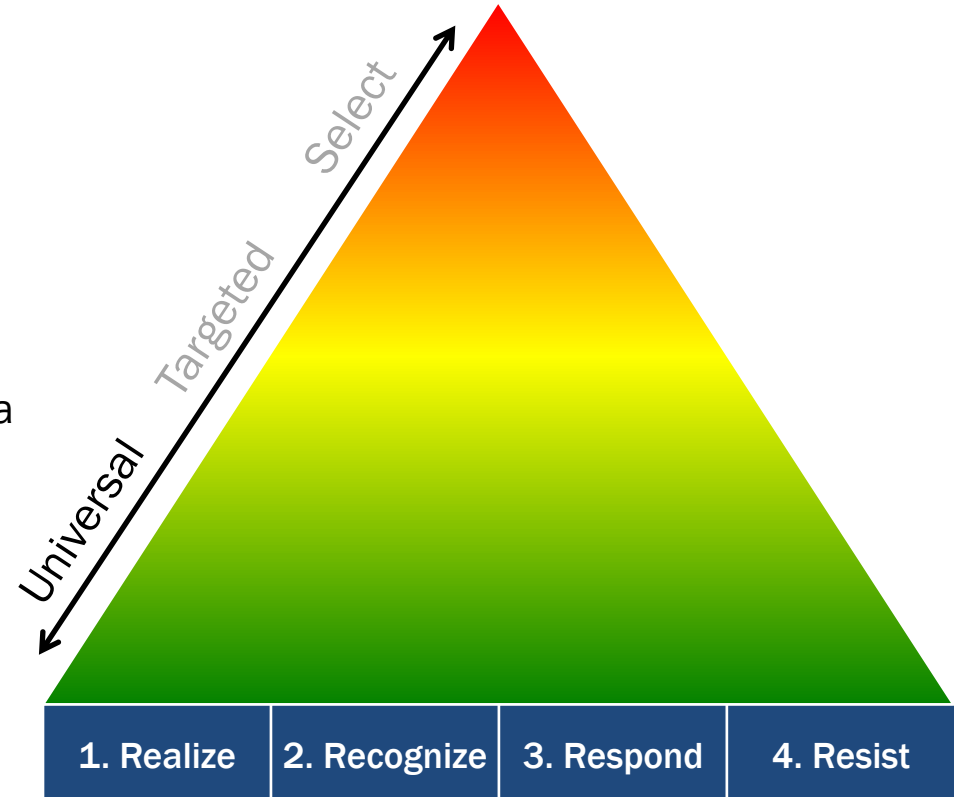
- A multitier system of support is a continuum of supports for students that provide a range of service and support intensities
- The system is built to facilitate the four R's:
 1. Realize
 2. Recognize
 3. Respond
 4. Resist
- An individual student will move along the continuum



The trauma-informed school is the foundation for a range of interventions for traumatized students

UNIVERSAL

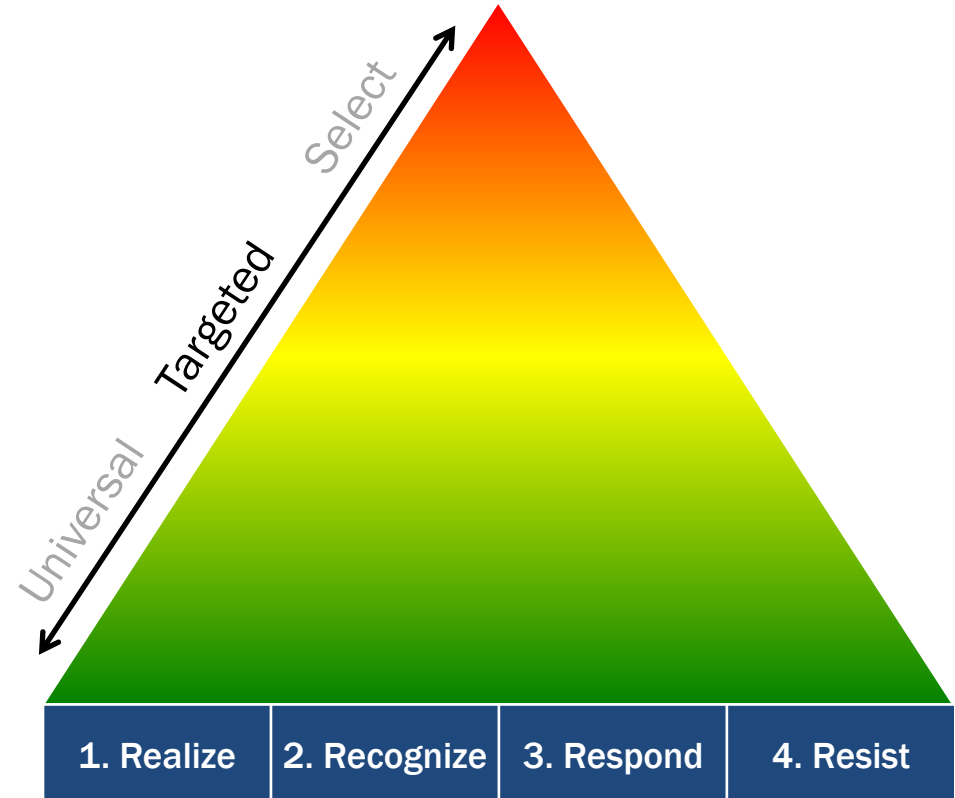
- Interventions for all students
- Goals
 - Change climate to see actions through a “trauma lens”
 - Consider why a student is responding a particular way before reacting
 - Realize and recognize symptoms of trauma
 - Skillful interactions with traumatized students
 - Use trauma informed discipline and policing strategies



The trauma-informed school is the foundation for a range of interventions for traumatized students

TARGETED

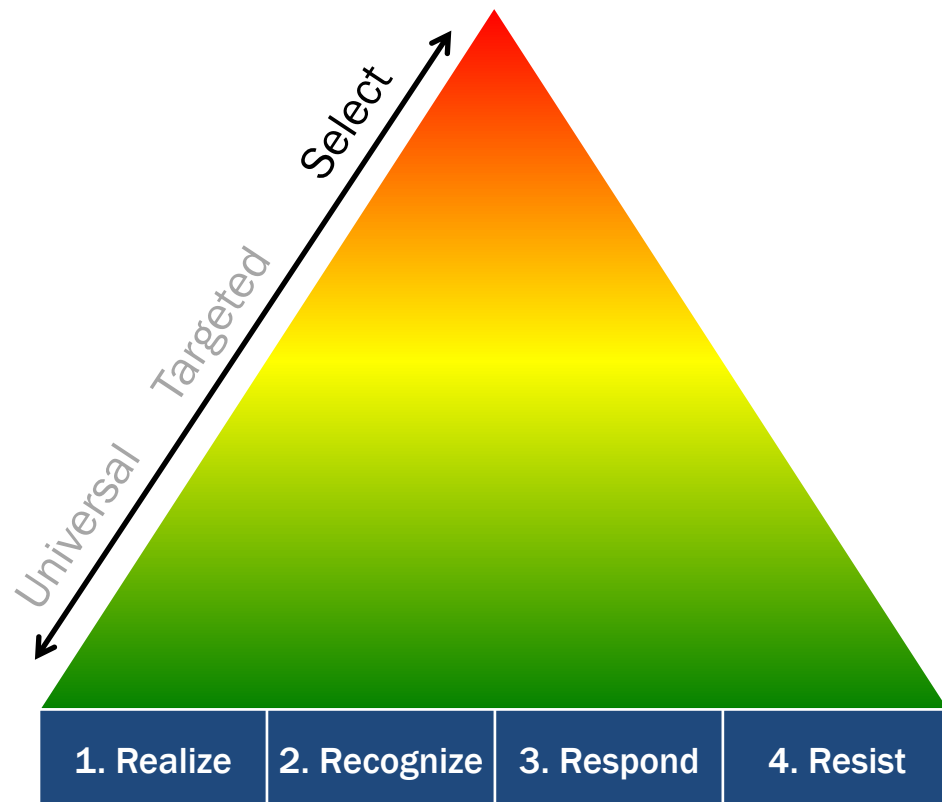
- Preventive interventions for at-risk youth
- Goals
 - Interventions to support at-risk students
 - Psychoeducation about trauma and signs and impact
 - Strengthening self-regulation skills
 - Reinforcing personal and educational support systems



The trauma-informed school is the foundation for a range of interventions for traumatized students

SELECT

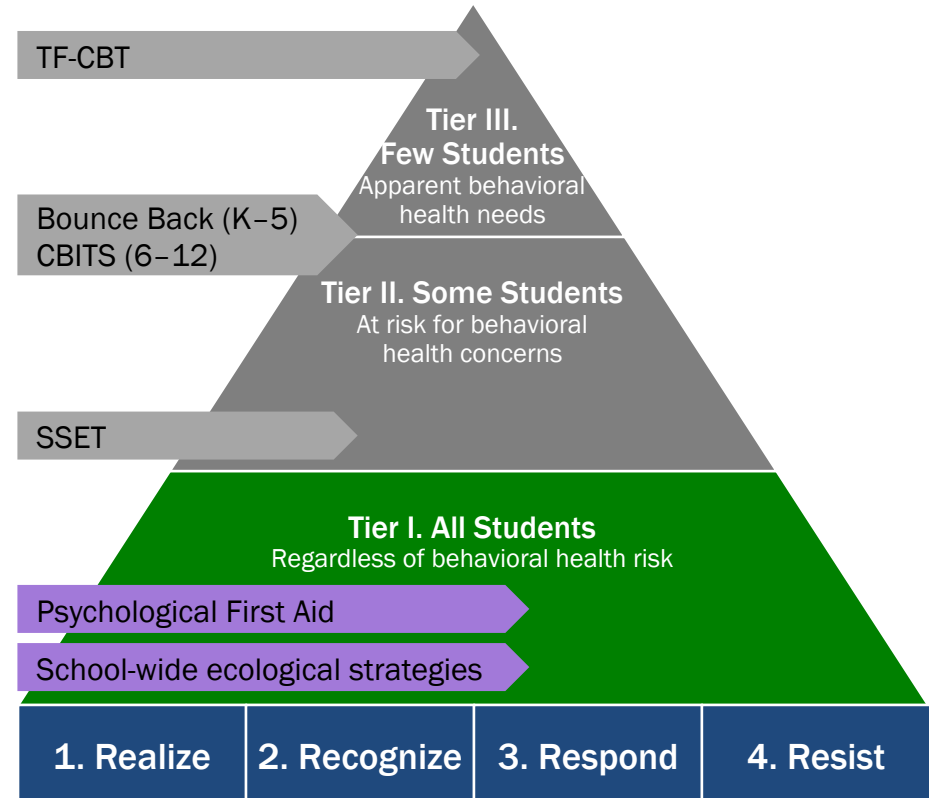
- Psychological interventions to remediate adverse effects and avoid retraumatization
- Goals
 - Ensure students get appropriate and effective treatment
 - Address disorders that can impair learning
 - Remediate adverse effects and avoid re-traumatization



Specific strategies and programs help students at each level

TIER I: ALL STUDENTS

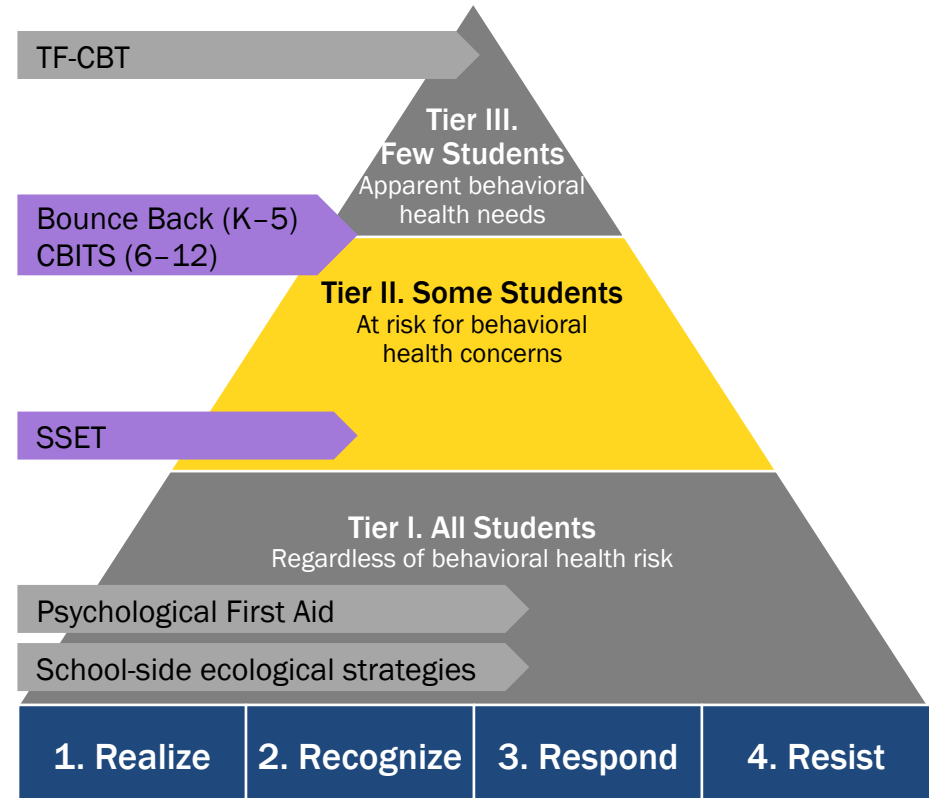
- Strategies and programs
 - Recognize common student triggers
 - Loud chaotic environments
 - Situations that generate feelings of helplessness, vulnerability
 - Clear predictable routines and expectations
 - Provide opportunities for student choice and sense of control, options and spaces for calming down
 - In-service trainings about trauma and ways to interact with students exposed to trauma (Psychological First Aid)
 - Promote supportive positive school culture and climate using school wide strategies (School-wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports, Bullying prevention)



Specific strategies and programs help students at each level

TIER II: AT-RISK STUDENTS

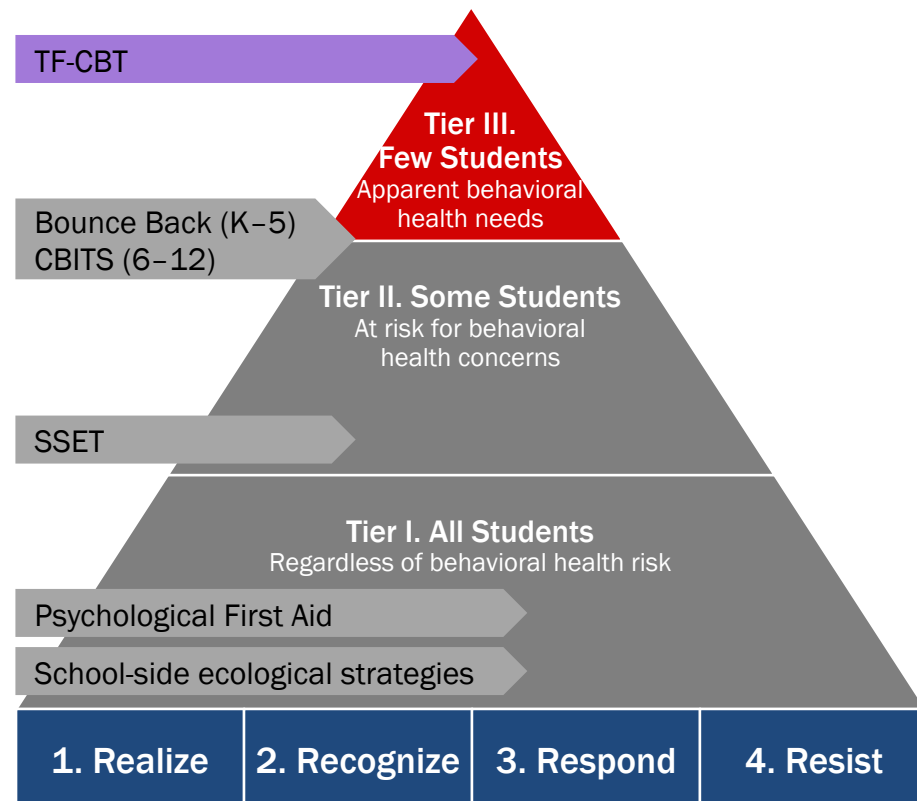
- Strategies and programs
 - Give permission to leave class if feelings become overwhelming
 - Provide additional support (e.g., check to ensure homework is written down)
 - Appropriate accommodations on 504 or IEP plans
 - Provide a safe place to talk about experience
 - Programs include SSET, CBITS, Bounce Back



Specific strategies and programs help students at each level

TIER III: FEW STUDENTS

- Strategies and programs
 - Refer for evaluation and appropriate treatment
 - School and/or Community Based services
 - Advocate for student
 - Appropriate accommodations and supports on 504 or IEP plans
 - Ensure good communication between clinician and school personnel
 - Clinical interventions include TF-CBT, CBITS, SPARCS, Bounce Back

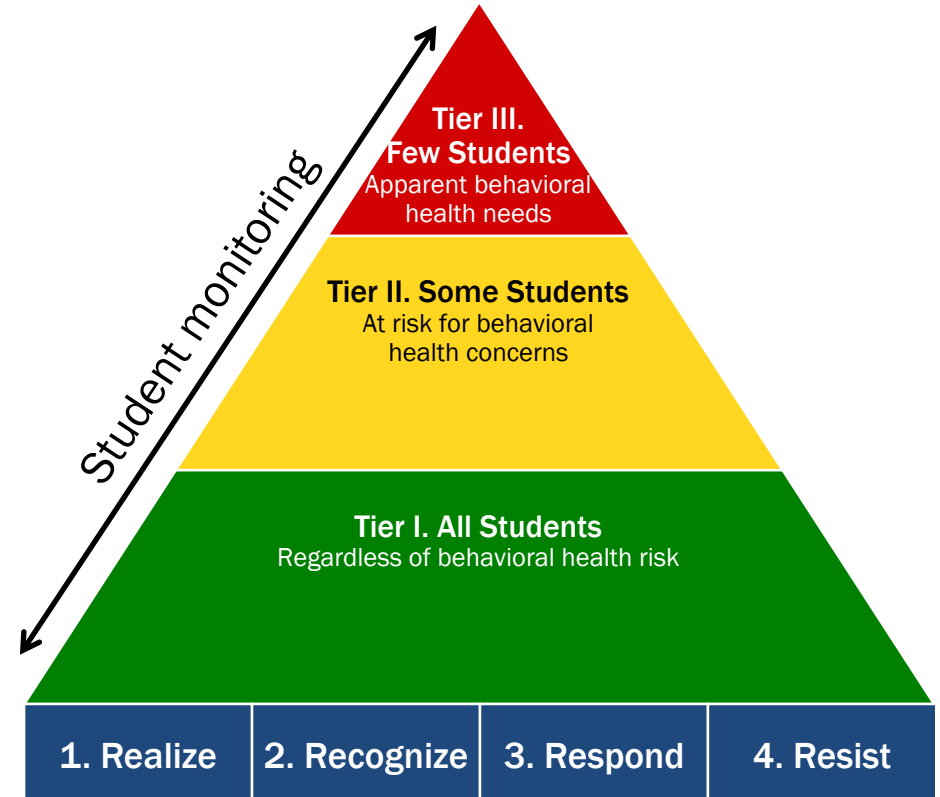


Support for implementing these programs exist

- Tier 1
 - Now is the Time Initiative, Project AWARE (Dept of Ed)
 - Comprehensive School Safety (Dept of Justice, NIJ)
 - Health Services Initiative, DHHS (requires state plan amendment)
 - School Climate Transformation Grants (Dept of Ed)
- Tier 2
 - Now is the Time Initiative, Project Prevent (Dept of Ed)
 - Behavioral Workforce Education and Training, (SAMHSA/DHHS)
 - Healthy Tomorrows (Health Resources Services Administration/DHHS)
- Tier 3
 - Revised Free Care Rule (HHS/CMS)

Specific activities and interventions to help students at each level

- Monitor students to provide appropriate range of least intensive supports
 - What is best for each student will change over time



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Remember that where a school “starts” is up to them

- Very few schools can “*Do it all*” at the same time
- Not all interventions need to be launched . . .
 - . . . in a particular order
 - . . . at the same time
 - . . . identically across schools
- Take multiple factors into account
 - Community priorities
 - Student population and needs
 - Neighborhood/county characteristics
 - District priorities
 - Available funding

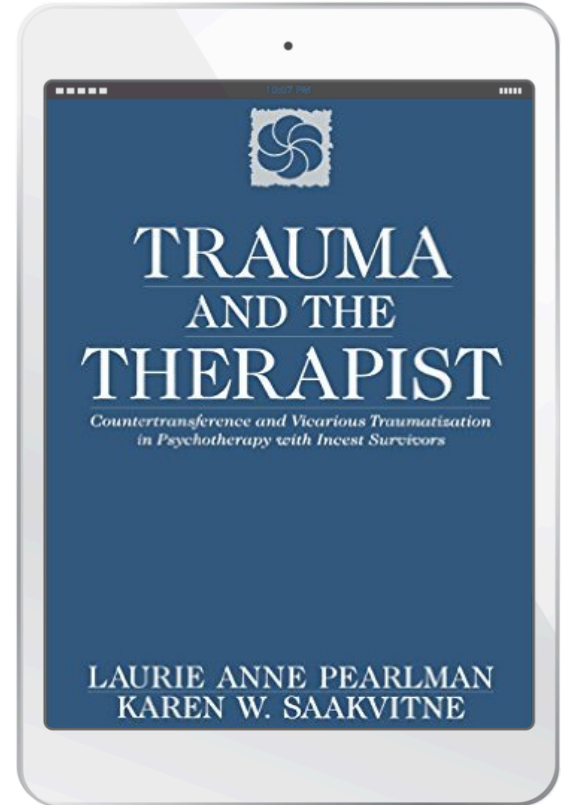


Remember that school staff are at risk of “compassion fatigue”

- People who work with children who have experienced trauma are at risk
- Other risk factors
 - Those who are empathetic
 - Those who have experienced painful or traumatic events in their own lives
 - Those who help others and often neglect or are unaware of their own feelings and needs
- If unrecognized and unaddressed, results in ineffective programs, burnout, and staff turnover



“ We have an obligation to our [students], as well as to ourselves, our colleagues, and our loved ones, not to be damaged by the work that we do.”
—Pearlman and Saakvitne, 1995





QUESTIONS?

Bradley Stein, M.D., Ph.D.
bradley_stein@rand.org
(412) 683-2300, x4476





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NCTSN

The National Child
Traumatic Stress Network



www.rand.org

<http://cbitsprogram.org/>

<https://ssetprogram.org/>

<https://traumaawareschools.org/>

<https://bouncebackprogram.org/>