

CMHS's National Center for Trauma Informed Care (NCTIC) is pleased to call your attention to a recent meeting on men and trauma supported by CMHS's National GAINS Center. The meeting addressed the need for increased recognition of men's trauma histories, and the further development of promising gender-specific trauma counseling and peer support approaches in the mental health and criminal justice systems.

NCTIC brings you useful information to stimulate and foster change toward trauma-informed approaches for the health and wellbeing of survivors and consumers in publicly funded systems.

On November 30, 2006 the National GAINS Center for Systemic Change for Justice-Involved Persons with Mental Illness convened approximately 50 topical experts (including consumers and survivors, social service providers, and advocates) from across the nation to develop a roadmap for addressing the mounting concern about the high rates of trauma histories and co-occurring disorders in men who come in contact with the mental health and/or criminal justice systems.

The GAINS Center has helped to pioneer the introduction of trauma counseling groups for women with trauma histories and co-occurring disorders in the criminal justice system, which has been very well received in specific sites where they have been implemented. Building on the insights and knowledge available from this experience, GAINS is developing knowledge for a similar initiative with men. The meeting was supported and funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's (SAMHSA's) Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS).

The meeting, convened as part of SAMHSA/CMHS's ongoing efforts to address the nature and impact of trauma more broadly on men, women, and children across the United States, was marked by intense and emotional working sessions to develop practical recommendations and strategies. Among the group's recommendations were:

- increased public awareness about men and trauma;
- trauma training for people working in the mental health and criminal justice fields;
- expanding the awareness and use of promising men's peer support counseling approaches;
- improved state-federal collaboration; and
- improved inter-agency collaboration.

Gender-specific approaches to trauma recovery in publicly funded systems typically have focused on women's histories of interpersonal violence and on trauma counseling in women's groups. There is a growing consciousness that many more men have experienced interpersonal violence than previously thought. Men of all ages have reported alarmingly high rates of prior and often compounded trauma— primarily experiencing or witnessing violence—in community-based surveys,

clinical populations, and justice-involved settings of all types, and the trauma is clearly linked to a variety of mental, psychical, and behavior health problems.

Many of these men end up in the mental health or justice systems, which can be extremely re-traumatizing. In the vast majority of cases, these men are eventually released back in to society with very little (if any) trauma support, setting the stage for any number of the potentially unwanted behaviors related to untreated or unaddressed trauma— including violence perpetration, personal victimization and increased reliance on self-soothing measures such as abuse of substances and legal or illegal drugs. This can fuel the cycle of despair and further strain mental health and criminal justice resources.

Participants in the GAINS meeting included not only formerly incarcerated men (many of whom are also combat veterans), but also male survivors of domestic abuse and neglect, childhood sexual abuse, and many of the other forms of trauma that are rarely discussed by men. While we have learned that men are generally more likely than women to fall victim to interpersonal violence (not including sexual assault), they are also less likely than women to report the violence against them or seek assistance with mental health or substance abuse concerns. Part of the reason for non-disclosure is that men feel that they face daunting gender-linked social stigmas (i.e. being "a man" and being a "victim" or "survivor" are simply incompatible). It has also been learned that many men experience great difficulty in naming and talking about the feelings that drive their behavior, which can be a critical barrier in counseling.

Men report that available counseling or services do not meet their trauma-induced needs, or that there simply are no programs with trauma counseling available to them (as is the case with male survivors of domestic violence). The development, during the past few years, of trauma counseling peer support approaches for "men only" has created some new alternatives, and these approaches are being implemented and studied in several different types of settings. Information on these approaches is available through GAINS.

The men and trauma meeting marks a starting point from which to begin building accessible and meaningful trauma peer support counseling resources for men in the mental health and criminal justice systems.

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About CMHS'S National Center for Trauma-Informed Care

NCTIC (f/k/a the Center on Women, Violence and Trauma) was created in 2005 and is funded by the Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS)/SAMHSA. NCTIC offers trauma training, technical assistance, education and outreach, a speakers bureau, and resources to stimulate and support change in publicly- funded programs and systems in order to address the trauma experienced by survivors and consumers.

Website: <http://www.mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic>

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