



Press release

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Contact: Annie Racine, 513.348.0861

Trauma toolkit analyzes Ohio schools, provides tools

Most Ohio schools need to comprehensively change the way they work with children who have experienced trauma, but some have already made a transformation, according to a new report co-released today by Policy Matters Ohio and Children's Defense Fund-Ohio. *Addressing children's trauma: A toolkit for Ohio schools* provides details about schools in Ohio and elsewhere that are leading examples of how to best educate children who have experienced trauma. The report also offers resources, best practices, and tools for schools looking to improve these practices.

"More than one in five American children have experienced at least two incidents of trauma: abuse, violence, extreme poverty, neglect, or insecure family relationships," said report author Annie Racine, "Trauma can change the neural pathways in the brain, making children susceptible to behavioral and cognitive problems in school. Trauma-informed schools can help address these problems, giving children their futures back."

Trauma-affected children can lash out, hurt themselves, hurt others, or withdraw from activities, the report found. They often struggle in school as a result of trauma – lower grades, more absences, more suspensions, and lower graduation rates are some common consequences. Addressing trauma early can improve educational prospects and save enormous resources down the road in reduced health, welfare, special education, and criminal justice costs.

"Schools that become trauma-informed help children achieve academically and socially, and keep children in school and out of our juvenile justice system," said Sarah Biehl, Policy Director at CDF-Ohio.

"We recommend state-level funding so schools can provide early screening for trauma exposure, train personnel, address children's needs and help Ohio students overcome the effects of trauma," said Amy Hanauer, Executive Director of Policy Matters.

In Ohio, Cleveland's social emotional learning program and Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers are incorporating trauma-informed practices district-wide. Luis Muñoz Marin K-8 School, Lincoln-West High School, Belden Elementary, Westerville City Schools and South-Western City Schools are some that use trauma-informed approaches. The report also cites work by Public Children Services Association of Ohio, the Ohio Trauma Consortium, Akron Children's Hospital, the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services, and offers a comprehensive index with best practices nationally.

