



NATIONAL COALITION *for* HOMELESS VETERANS
“SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach”
[Full Report](#)

Quick Takeaways:

- Trauma is an event or series of events experienced by an individual or group that has lasting effects on a person’s well-being.
- The primary goal of the trauma-informed approach is to avoid re-traumatizing a person.
- Implementing the trauma-informed approach requires change at all levels of an organization.

Study:

This report details SAMHSA’s definition of trauma and guidelines for creating a trauma-informed approach for an organization. The ultimate goal of this approach is to avoid re-traumatization. SAMHSA defines trauma as an event or series of events that is experienced and has lasting effects on a person’s mental, physical, social, or spiritual well-being.

SAMHSA differentiates the trauma-informed approach from trauma-specific services. The trauma-informed approach is guided four assumptions, known as the “Four R’s”: **Realization** about trauma and how it can affect people and groups, **recognizing** the signs of trauma, having a system which can **respond** to trauma, and **resisting re-traumatization**.

The trauma-informed approach also operates under six key principles: Safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues. Together, these key principles create a workplace environment that respects people’s experience and manages the incidence of re-traumatization.

Implementing a trauma-informed approach requires change at every level of an organization. SAMHSA outlines ten domains where the trauma-informed approach can be implemented: Governance and leadership; policy; physical environment; engagement and involvement; cross sector collaboration; screening, assessment, and treatment services; training and workforce development; progress monitoring and quality assurance; financing; and evaluation. In each of these domains, an organization should consider how to implement the key principles of the trauma-informed approach. For instance, in the domain of financing, an organization should adjust their budget to account for training on trauma-informed approaches.