

Resolution on Trauma-focused Mental Health Care and Advocacy

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The American Counseling Association (ACA) stands in alliance with individuals who have experienced some form of trauma and recognizes that feeling safe from trauma is a basic human right. Further, ACA supports the use of trauma-focused mental health support and advocacy for individuals, groups, and communities negatively influenced by trauma.

Trauma is any event or experience that leads to extreme emotional distress or psychological impairment. Trauma can be the result of discrimination and prejudice, bullying, oppression, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, natural disasters, institutional policies that disenfranchise, vicarious and historical trauma, violence, and war. Public awareness of the impact of trauma has increased in recent years; however the psychological ramifications of trauma continues to be a major mental health issue that affects many individuals, groups, and communities. Moreover, trauma has been underscored as a top-priority public health threat by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The debilitating impact of trauma, if left untreated, is even more devastating. Counselors are increasingly being called upon to deal with individuals, groups, and communities who have experienced various forms of trauma. Well-trained counselors are in an excellent position to respond to the causes of trauma and the resultant deleterious mental health consequences associated with traumatic events.

Albeit anyone can experience trauma, women, children, and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to traumatic events, which can have lasting and lifelong consequences if it is not addressed or is treated ineffectively.

Therefore, ACA is committed to promote counselor competence as it pertains to access to and delivery of trauma-focused care for all individuals, groups, and communities who have been negatively affected by trauma regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, culture, physical ability, age, sexual or affectional identity, and socio economic status.

The ACA and its members stand in solidarity with counselors in schools, agencies, and other work settings who counsel and advocate on behalf of all people who have been directly or indirectly affected by trauma. The ACA and its members are dedicated to creating safe spaces for those impacted by trauma and for establishing opportunities for ongoing culturally-responsive trauma-focused counselor training. The ACA and its members pledge to advocate on behalf of and with those individuals.

The American Counseling Association offers trauma and disaster mental health training (<https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/trauma-disaster>).

Competencies for Counselors and Related Helping Professionals:

The American Psychological Association developed Trauma Competencies for helping professionals. Acquisition of these core competencies is necessary for all trauma-related clinical work. Five broad competencies were delineated within this model including:

- o Scientific knowledge about trauma

- o Psycho-social trauma-focused assessment
- o Trauma-informed professionalism
- o Trauma-focused psychosocial intervention
- o Trauma informed relational and systems

To access the complete text of Trauma Competencies go to the following link:<https://www.apa.org/ed/resources/trauma-competencies-training.pdf>