



## CALL FOR APPLICATIONS

### School Year 2015 – 16: Trauma-Informed Approaches Learning Collaborative for Schools

The New Orleans Health Department (NOHD) seeks applications from schools to join a learning collaborative to support the use of trauma-informed approaches in schools. This unique opportunity will allow schools to learn ways to meet the needs of traumatized students from a cadre of local experts and to share best practices with one another.

#### ELIGIBILITY

This opportunity is open to K-12 public schools – both charter and direct run – operating in the city of New Orleans. Up to six (6) individual schools will be selected for participation in the learning collaborative. Individual schools from the same charter management organization (CMO) may apply separately.

#### TIMELINE

Below is the anticipated timeline for this application process:

- March 13 - Applications released
- March 23 - Informational call for interested applicants (optional) at 4 pm CDT  
*Conference Line: 712-432-0927*  
*PIN: 270386#*
- April 10 - Applications due at 5 pm CDT
- April 17 - Decisions made and schools notified

#### HOW TO APPLY

Applications should be sent electronically to Chris Gunther at [cjgunther@nola.gov](mailto:cjgunther@nola.gov) by **5 pm CST on April 10**.

Applications should include the following components:

- A **cover letter** signed by a CMO leader, school leader, and a school mental health professional (e.g. school social worker, school psychologist, or school counselor). Cover letters should:
  - Indicate support for this project at the CMO and school level and
  - Identify a point person for this project at the school level.
- A **school profile and narrative**, including:
  - Statement of school interest and commitment
    - Why is your school interested in this opportunity?
    - What does your school hope to gain from the learning collaborative experience?
    - Briefly describe how your school will commit to meet the objectives of the learning collaborative (outlined below in “More Details: The Learning Collaborative Framework”).
  - Statement of current assets/capacity related to trauma-informed approaches
    - Please describe any previous experiences with trauma-informed approaches. Does your school currently implement trauma-informed approaches? If so, how?

- Please describe your school’s current mental health staffing
- Does your school have any existing partnerships to provide mental health services

The school profile and narrative combined **should not exceed 3 pages**, single-spaced, size 12 font, 7.5” x 10.5” margins. The cover letter does not count against the 3 page limit.

**WHAT TO EXPECT AS A PART OF THE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE**

Because this is a multi-year process, schools are asked to commit to the learning collaborative for a minimum of two years.

Year 1 will focus on creating a common vision for a trauma-informed school and building a coalition to act on that vision. Year 2 will focus on providing a continuum of mental health services that promote school safety and connectedness; identifying students exposed to trauma; and addressing the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of those students.

Members of the learning collaborative are asked to commit to participation at the CMO and school level and are expected to designate a single point person for this initiative. In addition, learning collaborative members will:

- Create a school leadership team focused on becoming a trauma-sensitive school that will participate in monthly learning collaborative meetings to share lessons learned across member schools;
- Participate in an initial two-day professional development session on trauma-informed approaches and two hours of monthly professional development thereafter for all school staff;
- Participate in monthly meetings with other schools that are members of the learning collaborative;
- Conduct an assessment of current school priorities, procedures, and practices;
- Develop an action plan to align these priorities, procedures, and practices under a trauma-informed vision; and
- Participate in formative evaluations of learning collaborative activities.

**MORE DETAILS: THE LEARNING COLLABORATIVE FRAMEWORK**

Objectives

- 1) Provide support to schools as they transform school climate to become trauma-sensitive.
- 2) Build schools’ organizational capacity to implement, sustain, and continue to improve the delivery of trauma-focused services.

Expected Outcomes

This project is expected to help schools in the following ways:

For students:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased academic achievement</li> <li>• Improved engagement in school activities</li> <li>• Improved social/emotional development</li> <li>• Reduced out-of-class time</li> </ul>
For staff:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved staff morale</li> <li>• Reduced staff turnover</li> </ul>
For schools:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved school climate</li> </ul>

## Vision

We envision trauma-informed schools as environments that foster academic, social, and emotional learning and growth. They are safe, predictable, and consistent places for children and youth. This vision for a trauma-informed school permeates throughout the entire school, meaning that all teachers, school staff, and administrators routinely use a “trauma-informed lens” when thinking about and interacting with students.

Trauma-informed schools (a) are built on an understanding of the prevalence and impact of trauma on children’s development and school functioning, (b) acknowledge the diversity of student responses to trauma, and (c) provide a continuum of evidence-based services designed to effectively identify and manage the mental health needs of students impacted by trauma, increase school safety, and prevent future trauma.

## Values

The following values are foundational to our work:

- *Safety* – We are focused on supporting all students to feel safe physically, socially, emotionally, and academically.
- *Connectedness* – This collaborative emphasizes the importance of relationships and connections: between children and adults; between children and their school; between schools themselves; and between schools and community-based resources. By deepening these connections, we can improve outcomes for all.
- *Partnership* – We recognize the value of each member –both faculty and partner CMOs and schools – and are committed to sharing our own individual expertise while empowering others to share theirs.
- *Holistic strategies* – Emphasizing the context within which a child lives, we strive to identify solutions that are comprehensive, schoolwide, and systemic in nature.
- *Choice and commitment* – Participation in the collaborative is voluntary, but this choice carries a commitment to be present, active, and energetic in the work.
- *Positive youth development* – We recognize the inherent value of youth and seek to support them in building upon their own strengths.

## Who We Are

This cross-sector collaborative includes mental health and social service practitioners, researchers from area academic institutions, and local government. Collaborative “faculty” include the following:

- Paulette Carter, Children’s Bureau of New Orleans
- Laura Danna, Mercy Family Center, Project Fleur-de-Lis
- Chris Gunther, New Orleans Health Department
- Stacy Overstreet and Courtney Baker, Tulane University Department of Psychology
- Taslim van Hattum, Louisiana Public Health Institute
- Kathleen Whalen, Strategies for Youth Development

## Framework

Participation in this collaborative will assist schools in reshaping their school’s policies, procedures and practices through a trauma lens. Schools will identify existing practices that uplift the safety and wellbeing of students and examine areas of the school climate, culture, and practices that may hinder the creation of a safe and supportive school environment and may be harmful to the most vulnerable students. In partnership with collaborative faculty, schools will learn from cutting-edge research, evidence-based practices, and a peer-to-peer community to guide them through the process of becoming a trauma-informed school.

*Year 1 (2015-16 School Year) – Create a common vision for a trauma-informed school and build a coalition to realize that vision.*

Collaborative faculty will support school partners in achieving the following objectives:

- Creation of a Leadership Team focused on becoming a trauma-informed school.
- Professional development for school staff to create a common understanding problem of student exposure to violence and to build consensus for schoolwide approaches aimed at creating safe and supportive school environments. Professional development will build an understanding of the following topics:
  - The effects of trauma on children and the base rates of trauma in the area;
  - The behavioral manifestations of trauma;
  - Best practices for identifying trauma, promoting school safety, and addressing the social and emotional needs of traumatized students;
  - The signs that school staff are themselves being traumatized by their students’ experiences and ways to seek and provide support for these feelings and their consequences.
- Engagement with students, parents and community members served by each school around the problem of violence and the development of ecologically valid approaches to create safe and supportive schools.
- Strategic alignment of school priorities, procedures, and practices within the trauma-informed vision.

*Year 2 (2016-17 School Year) - Provide a continuum of mental health services that promote school safety and connectedness, identify students exposed to trauma, and address the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of those students.*

Collaborative faculty will support school partners in achieving the following objectives:

- Increase the number and specialized training of school-based mental health service providers to expand the range and quality of services for students exposed to trauma.
- Build partnerships with community agencies for training, outreach opportunities, and service referral through engagement with the New Orleans Health Department and community mental health agencies.

## **QUESTIONS?**

An optional information call for interested applicants will be held on March 23 at 4 pm. Conference details are as follows:

*Conference Line: 712-432-0927*

*PIN: 270386#*

For more information, contact:

Chris Gunther, Manager of Strategic Initiatives

New Orleans Health Department

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