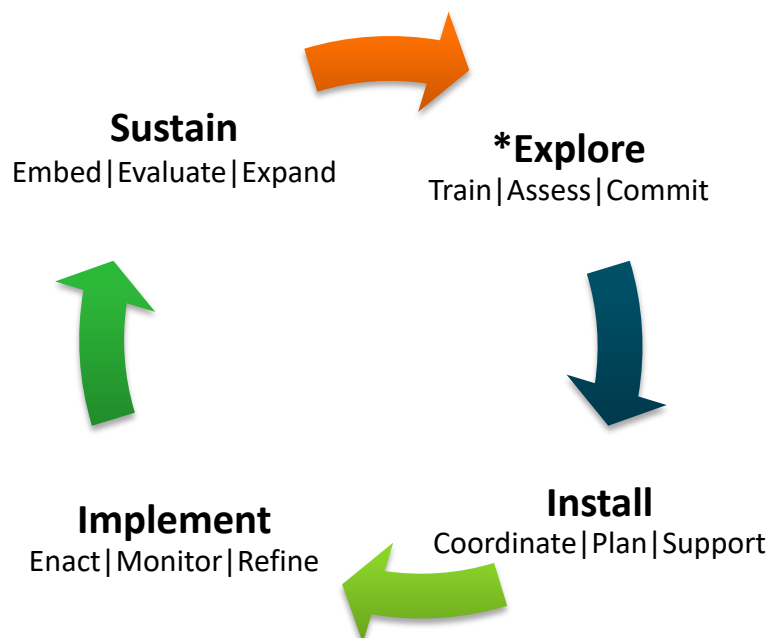# Roadmap for Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach

Adopting a universal, trauma-informed approach involves changes to policy, practice, and culture and requires ongoing efforts to ensure a shared understanding and response across an agency. The journey to becoming a trauma-informed organization is ongoing and requires long-term investment in implementing and sustaining trauma-informed practices. Having a broader vision and roadmap for change will help leaders to chart a course of action and maintain focus and commitment over time.

This handout introduces a multi-phased process for adopting a trauma-informed approach that includes four stages with associated steps for agencies to take at each stage (see Figure 1.). Agencies may use the Trauma-Informed Implementation Checklist provided here to determine where they are in the change process and to identify next steps. Some organizations will be at the beginning of this journey and will start at the first stage, and others who have already progressed towards implementing and sustaining a trauma-informed approach, may consider next steps to advance the work or revisit earlier stages to reexamine capacity and readiness, strengthen infrastructure, and plan for adopting new practices.

It is important to note that while a roadmap with benchmarks for change provides a helpful organizing structure and direction for agencies, the journey to adopt a trauma-informed approach is rarely this linear in practice. For example, agencies may be more advanced in their implementation of some elements of trauma-informed care and in the early stages with others. In some cases, organizations may already be implementing trauma-informed practices but want to revisit earlier stages to explore issues with buy-in or to put more formal structures in place for supporting the work moving forward.

Figure 1. Multi-Phased Process for Adopting a Trauma-Informed Approach

Sustain
Embed|Evaluate|Expand

*Explore
Train|Assess|Commit

Install
Coordinate|Plan|Support

Implement
Enact|Monitor|Refine

TRAUMA-INFORMED IMPLEMENTATION CHECKLIST

Use the checklist below to determine where your organization is in the process of adopting a trauma-informed approach in order to determine your next steps for completing each stage and moving on to the next. If you have moved through all four stages, return to stage one and determine what new elements of trauma-informed care you would like to explore and further integrate into organizational operations.

Trauma-Informed Organizational Implementation Checklist	
Phase 1: Explore **Key Activities:** ▪ Train ▪ Assess ▪ Commit	**Questions to consider at this stage:** • Is there a core team of champions that includes leadership, who are invested in supporting trauma-informed change efforts? • Do staff members have a shared understanding of trauma and what it means to adopt a trauma-informed approach? • What is our current capacity in trauma-informed care? • How ready are we to more fully adopt a trauma-informed approach? • Where does this work fit into our existing vision and planning for the organization? **Identify which components are currently in place (program or agency-wide depending on the scope of the change efforts):** There is a core team of champions, including leadership, who can educate staff and support the change process. All staff has a foundational understanding of trauma and trauma-informed care. We have assessed our current practices related to trauma-informed care to determine strengths and areas for growth. We have assessed our readiness as an organization to more fully adopt a trauma-informed approach. Agency leadership has articulated a commitment to a trauma-informed approach.
Phase 2: Install **Key Activities:** ▪ Coordinate ▪ Plan ▪ Support	**Questions to consider at this stage:** • Do we have the infrastructure in place for supporting an intentional trauma-informed change effort (leadership support, staffing, resources)? • Are all staff represented in the change effort? • Do we have a plan for how we want to proceed? • Are we all in agreement with the plan and areas of focus? • Do we have a process in place for supporting plan implementation? **Identify which components are currently in place:** We have a multi-disciplinary trauma-informed workgroup/committee to lead our process for adopting a trauma-informed approach (Beyond the initial core leadership team this workgroup includes representation from staff in varied roles). We have developed an action plan for adopting trauma-informed practices across core domains. [Note: action plans will evolve over time as organizations add new practice goals.]

	Trauma-Informed Organizational Implementation Checklist
	We have committed resources to supporting these efforts (e.g., leadership support, staffing)
	We have a process in place for monitoring our progress in adopting a trauma-informed approach (e.g., feedback loops, meeting structures).
	We have a process in place for evaluating impact (qualitative & quantitative).
Phase 3: Implement **Key Activities:** ▪ Enact ▪ Monitor ▪ Refine	**Questions to consider at this stage:** • What is working? • What goals and action steps need to be adjusted or modified? • What is missing that needs to be considered? **Identify which components are currently in place:** We are actively implementing the action steps outlined in our strategic plan. We can identify concrete changes that are happening at the organization related to trauma-informed practice. We are monitoring how these changes are working and gathering feedback from staff regarded needed adjustments.
Phase 4: Sustain **Key Activities:** ▪ Embed ▪ Evaluate ▪ Expand	**Questions to consider at this stage:** • How do we sustain new practices? • How do we continue to adapt our approach as needed? • How do we educate others about our lessons learned/findings? • What else can we do to support a trauma-informed approach within our organization and within the larger system? **Identify which components are currently in place:** We have successfully implemented new practices for supporting a trauma-informed approach. We have processes in place for adjusting and adding to our strategic plans as needed. We have identified strategies for embedding new practices to support sustainability. We are able to articulate outcomes related to adopting a trauma-informed approach (organization-level, staff-level, client-level). We are taking steps to expand our change efforts within our agency and beyond.