

8-4-2024

Trauma Informed Care in Hippotherapy

Erin M. Deren
es2006@mynsu.nova.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_capstone

 Part of the Occupational Therapy Commons

Share Feedback About This Item

NSUWorks Citation

Erin M. Deren. 2024. *Trauma Informed Care in Hippotherapy*. Capstone. Nova Southeastern University. Retrieved from NSUWorks, . (155)
https://nsuworks.nova.edu/hpd_ot_capstone/155.

This Entry Level Capstone is brought to you by the Department of Occupational Therapy at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in Department of Occupational Therapy Entry-Level Capstone Projects by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



Trauma Informed Care in Hippotherapy

Erin Deren, OTS
 Lisa Michelangelo, MPT
 Dr. Mariana D'Amico, EdD, OTR/L, FAOTA



Fig. 1 Calvin from Emerald M

Introduction

- Does the implementation of trauma-informed care (TIC) education for staff and families reduce the mental health burden and improve outcomes of children receiving hippotherapy services?
- Population served: staff, clients, and families of Emerald M Therapeutic Riding Center.
- Focus areas of the capstone project: clinical practice skills, education, and program development.

Capstone Site Description

- Emerald M Therapeutic Riding Center located in Brooksville, FL.
- A non-profit organization started by Lisa Michelangelo, MPT that offers hippotherapy services, horse powered reading program, adaptive riding, and emotional health support.
- They service children ages 2-18 and their families.

Summary of Needs Assessment

- Many of the clients Emerald M serve are from the foster care system and have experienced some form of trauma in their lives.
- This project bridged the gap between the therapist's lack of knowledge regarding TIC and the clients that could greatly benefit from trauma informed therapy practices when they come to Emerald M for mental health and hippotherapy services.
- This project allowed the staff at Emerald M to be better informed regarding TIC practices and allow them to better serve their clients with the skills, experience, and knowledge they require.

Literature Review Summary

- In the United States alone, more than 400,000 children experience the foster care system.
- Children that end up in the foster care system, can be due to abuse by a parent or family member, neglect, parental incarceration, drug abuse, and inadequate housing (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Children's Bureau, 2019).
- Roughly 39% of children in the US will experience some sort of traumatic event by the age of 13 (Swales et al., 2023).
- Trauma can be caused by a frightening or violent event that occurs in a child's life.
- These traumatic events can also include, mass violence events, natural disasters, traumatic separation, family, or community violence, physical or sexual abuse, sudden loss of a loved one, or serious accidents (Peterson, 2023).
- Stress levels can negatively affect the client's ability to cope with their disorders, interact with family and friends, and complete activities of daily living with little interruption (Moscholouri and Chandolias (2021).

Capstone Project Description & Outcomes

- I developed a trauma-informed care education module that can be implemented into future practices and used as a community resource for a non-profit organization to improve therapeutic outcomes of children and families that have experienced trauma. I determined the efficacy of the program by administering a pre and post survey (Fig 3 & 4) and developed an informative brochure for parents of the clients regarding trauma-informed care (Fig. 2).
- I learned that this site that requires diligence and focus on the client, the horse, environmental, and client factors to ensure safety during each session. I was trained on how to handle the horses, how to side walk during sessions, and how to complete other horse care duties associated with this setting.
- This site also offers the Horse Powered Reading Program, which uses horses to help with children use social emotional learning with academics and helps builds confidence while overcoming obstacles with reading difficulties.



Fig. 2 TIC brochure for parents

Trauma Informed Care Pre-Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Yes	No
Do you prefer learning in person?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you prefer learning online?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Have you heard of trauma informed care before?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Would you like to know more about trauma informed care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe clients at this facility would benefit from trauma informed care practices?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you believe that the staff and families at Emerald M would benefit from education on trauma informed care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation!

Fig. 3 pre-survey

Trauma Informed Care Post-Survey

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Yes	No
Do you believe the presentation was informative?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you able to define trauma and trauma-informed care?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you able to define common causes of trauma?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Are you able to recognize signs and symptoms of trauma?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Do you feel more comfortable with trauma-informed care principles after the presentation?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Thank you for your participation!

Fig. 4 post-survey

Capstone Goals Achieved

- Acquired clinical experience and subject knowledge in hippotherapy and trauma informed care in a non-traditional practice setting beyond those of an entry-level OT.
- Created a pre and post-survey for the staff at Emerald M Therapeutic Riding Center to assess effectiveness of trauma informed care education program.
- Developed an education module that can be implemented into future practices to improve therapeutic outcomes of children and families that have experienced trauma.
- Developed a trauma informed care information brochure for client's families to help caretakers identify strategies for client behaviors.



Fig. 5 Barn at Emerald M

Implications for OT Practice

- Occupational therapists can combine equine movement with different intervention strategies that align with the client's goals set in therapy (American Hippotherapy Association, 2022).
- Pro-social behaviors and empathy towards others are enhanced by horse care which can translate into positive interactions in their personal lives (Harvey et al., 2020).



Fig. 6 Cappy from Emerald M

References and Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Lisa Michelangelo and Dr. D'Amico for their mentorship.
 References Available Upon Request