

Trauma Considerations during Developmental Screening for Medical Providers

During developmental screening of Afghanistan refugee children, it is paramount to remember that the exposure to trauma can influence their developmental screening results. As with many children, they most likely screen within normal developmental parameters. However, if a delay(s) is identified, it may be influenced by recent past traumatic experiences that should be factored into the interpretation and referral options. In addition, traumatic experiences *may* also contribute to both externalizing (hyperactivity, opposition/defiance, aggression) and/or internalizing (anxiety, depression) behaviors which may also influence the developmental screen. The provider should synthesize the results to help determine the optimal option and timing for rescreening and/or referral.

There are resources available to providers seeking additional information regarding children who have experienced trauma. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). SAMSHA outlines an approach to trauma-informed care that incorporates four key elements:

1. Realizing the widespread impact of trauma.
2. Recognizing how trauma may affect clients, staff, and others in the program, organization, or system.
3. Responding by applying knowledge about trauma into practice; and
4. Preventing re-traumatization.¹

In addition, the Minnesota Department of Health's Refugee and International Health program provides statistics, health screening guidance, and clinical resources for health professionals involved with screening and assessment of refugee families.²

¹ SAMHSA (2014). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative.

Available at: <http://store.samhsa.gov/product/SAMHSA-s-Concept-of-Trauma-and-Guidance-for-a-Trauma-Informed-Approach/SMA14-4884>

² Minnesota Department of Health, Refugee, and International Health.

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/rih/index.html>