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Sinnissippi Centers is a Trauma Informed Agency

Agency and clients alike being transformed by ongoing initiative

(Dixon, IL)

When a person comes in for treatment to an agency like Sinnissippi Centers, they bring their own unique life events, circumstances, diagnoses, and other characteristics that all have to be considered in their treatment and recovery. It's a philosophy of seeing the whole person and everything about them as connected. A recent client visit to Sinnissippi illustrated this very clearly.

The client came to Sinnissippi Centers and told our clinicians that they had been to several competent treatment providers over the years but still their treatment and recovery wasn't quite fully realized, something was missing. Sinnissippi clinicians were able to identify a past trauma the client hadn't even thought of as being connected to their current situation. The ability to quickly identify the trauma and how it affects an individual's mental wellness is thanks to an ongoing initiative Sinnissippi has been in the process of, transforming into a Trauma Informed Care agency, and demonstrates the power of this treatment philosophy to transform care.

Over the course of the past year, Sinnissippi Centers has implemented this transformative process of becoming a Trauma Informed Care agency that has changed the way in which the organization approaches all kinds of situations such as screening and assessing clients, how they view the treatment process, how they handle admission to services and payment, how they take care of the agency staff (who also may have past trauma), and even how they view the organization's physical facilities.

Late in the fall of 2016, nearly every Sinnissippi Centers' employee, from direct service staff to secretaries to maintenance staff experienced an extensive and immersive training in Trauma Informed Care from an expert with the National Council on Behavioral Healthcare. Central to this training is the concept that the majority of people have experienced traumatic events in our life, and that these events have a lasting impact on thoughts, feelings and behaviors. To truly address the impact of trauma, an organization like Sinnissippi Centers must not only tailor its treatment approach, but examine all of the policies and procedures that dictate day to day operations. To fail to do so could result in additional trauma for our clients. For Sinnissippi, these changes include a variety of things.

- Sinnissippi Centers has developed a new "Treatment Philosophy" which will, in turn, drive a multitude of additional changes.
- New screening and assessment tools were implemented to be used with every client to detect the impact of trauma.

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- The referral and intake process has been revised to be more customer friendly, and to provide a more warm reception to Sinnissippi Centers.
- Changes were made in how missed appointments and past due balances are addressed. In the past many were kept from receiving services due to “no-shows” or lingering balances.
- Today, a more collaborative approach has been implemented to ensure that anyone who needs help can continue to get that help.
- A training plan has been developed to provide agency staff with the cutting edge training necessary to address trauma in those they serve.
- Training also includes basic customer service skills. Everyone entering the agency’s facilities should receive a warm and welcoming greeting.
- Professionals who hear about trauma from others every day can, as a result, experience trauma of their own. Sinnissippi Centers is taking steps to provide additional support for staff.
- A “Consumer Advisory Committee” is being formed to assist the agency in developing practices that are consistent with the needs and wishes of clients.
- Physical facilities have been evaluated to determine if the sights, sounds and even smells are conducive to treatment. With ongoing renovations, the Sterling and Mt. Carroll offices became the agency’s pilot for trauma informed environments.
- Many of the agency’s forms, including the New Client Information Packet, are being revised to use more welcoming and accommodating language. The language used by the agency in writing or verbally is critically important to make others feel welcome and safe.

These changes are just the beginning of a process that will guide the organization in making decisions into the future. The staff of Sinnissippi Centers sincerely hopes that every member of our community will find the organization to be a warm, welcoming and safe place to receive treatment.

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