Implementing the Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed (PCTI) Approach: Strategies for Aging Services

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As many as 90% of older Americans will experience a traumatic event in their lifetime, with exposure to multiple traumatic events being the norm (Kilpatrick et al., 2013). This trauma exposure can disrupt one's sense of safety and stability, affecting their health, well-being, and resilience throughout their life. While the prevalence and impact of trauma in general is increasingly understood, understanding the role of trauma in the aging process and aging service delivery is just emerging. To provide the best possible care to older adults with a history of trauma and their family caregivers, it is essential to provide care that is both person-centered and trauma-informed.

What is the PCTI Approach?

The person-centered, trauma-informed (PCTI) approach is a holistic model of care that promotes the health and well-being of individuals by accounting for the role of trauma across the life course, resisting retraumatization, and promoting the strength, agency, and dignity of people receiving care. The PCTI approach combines two approaches to care - the person-centered approach and the trauma-informed approach, demonstrating that trauma-informed principles must be utilized through the person-centered lens. The PCTI approach is universal, meaning that it can be used by any person at any level of any organization, in any care setting, and with any population.

At its core, the PCTI approach is grounded in the six trauma-informed principles developed by the US Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2014). These principles are understood and implemented in a person-centered way, guided by four commonly recognized principles of the person-centered approach. These principles are defined below.

Trauma-Informed Principles

Safety. Creating an environment where people receiving care, their families, and staff feel physically and psychologically secure and free of harm.

Trustworthiness & Transparency. Ensuring that operations and decisions are clear and transparent to build and maintain trust among people receiving care, family members, and staff.

Peer Support. Connecting people receiving care and their family members with others who have shared experiences to offer mutual understanding, support, and self-help.

Collaboration & Mutuality. Leveling power differences and recognizing that all staff, people receiving care, and families have an important role to play in the care and support provided.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice. Recognizing and building off an individual's strengths and experiences, ensuring their own goal setting and decision-making.

Cultural, Historical, & Other Considerations. Providing culturally responsive care and support that account for historical trauma and traditional cultural practices.

Person-Centered Principles

Personalization. Adjusting care based on the unique needs, goals, preferences, strengths, and values of each individual receiving support.

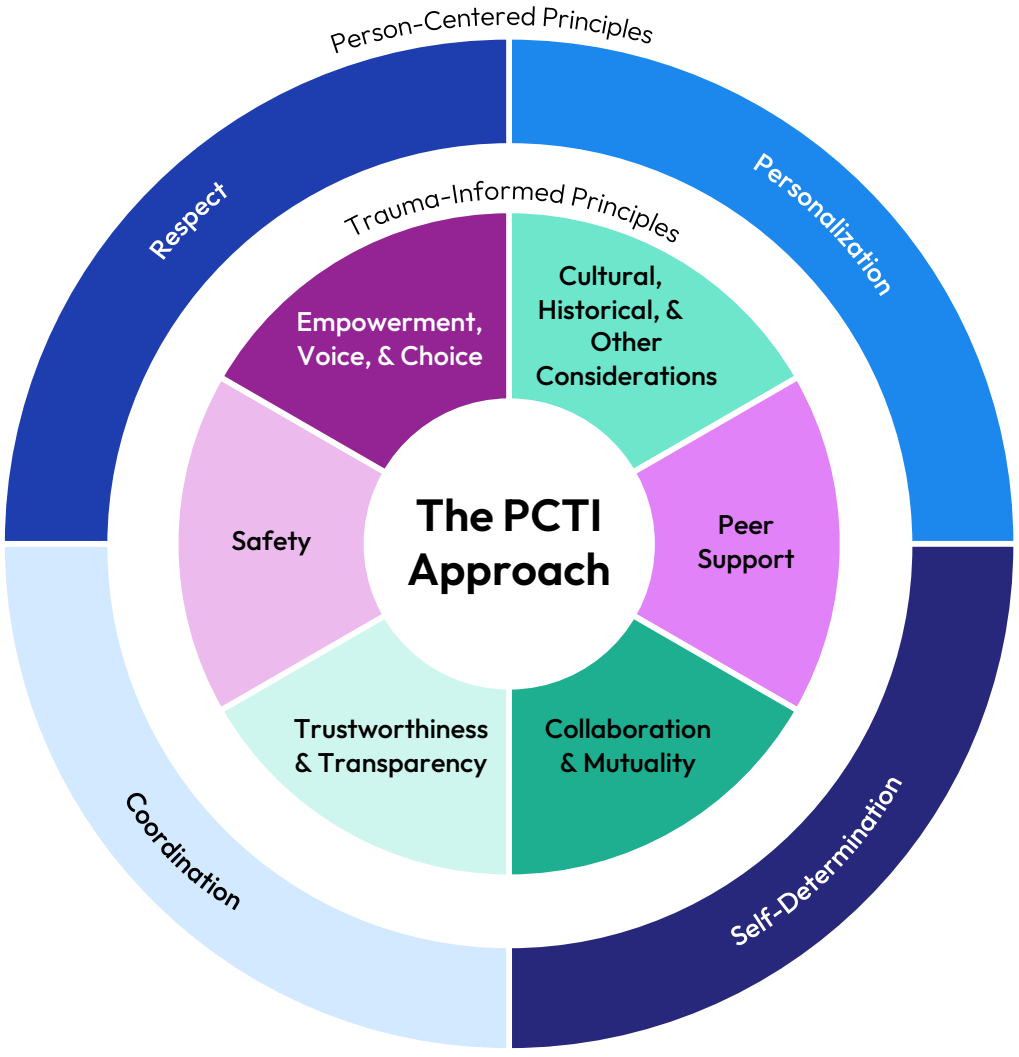
Self-Determination. Ensuring individuals direct their care and are empowered to identify, pursue, and achieve their own goals and full potential.

Coordination. Working in partnership and collaboration with an individual, their support system, and other care providers.

Respect. Treating everyone with patience, compassion, and dignity, including the people receiving care, their families, and staff.

The diagram below shows how these principles interplay. The inner circle is composed of the six trauma-informed principles, and the outer circle is comprised of four person-centered principles. There is no relationship between the physical proximity of principles on the diagram and how these principles connect. All person-centered principles can relate to all trauma-informed principles and vice versa. For example, the principle of "Respect" can be just as important in "Peer Support" as it is for "Empowerment, Voice, & Choice".

The PCTI Approach Model



Strategies for Implementing the PCTI Approach

There are various ways individuals and organizations can implement the PCTI approach. See the sample PCTI strategies below divided by PCTI principle. Many PCTI actions can embody multiple principles at once and therefore, the strategies below may be applicable to multiple principles. Note that not all implementation ideas are applicable to every context or scenario.

Safety

- Ensure spaces are welcoming, comfortable, quiet, and well-lit; that they can offer privacy; that the signage is legible; and that spaces are accessible for all including for individuals who are blind, deaf, have challenges with mobility, or those with intellectual disabilities.
- Employ affirming communication and behavior that is calm, validating, and reassuring.
- Demonstrate patience and understanding when people hesitate to use services or experience trauma symptoms. Ask about the greatest barrier to accessing services and if there is a way to mitigate that barrier. Recognize that people may not be able to articulate the answer, and pay attention to nonverbal cues.
- Create a supportive work environment and provide staff with space and time to decompress and unwind.

Trustworthiness & Transparency

- Introduce yourself and explain your role, the purpose of your meeting, what to expect, and next steps.
- Establish rapport between staff, volunteers, family caregivers, and care recipients to ensure everyone feels comfortable asking questions and providing feedback.
- Provide care recipients and their family caregivers with a reliable point-of-contact who they can reach out to for information and assistance.
- Demonstrate acceptance for care recipients by affirming identities, respecting boundaries, and providing opportunities to share personal experiences.

Peer Support

- Provide time and space for care recipients, family caregivers, and/or care providers to get to know one another.
- Create support groups for care recipients, and introduce care recipients to each other. Encourage them to share their challenges and solutions with one another.

- Host social events such as holiday parties, communal meals, or virtual programs. Place reminder calls to individuals before events and utilize volunteers to help place calls.
- Improve technology access and understanding to enable people to connect through additional platforms.

Collaboration & Mutuality

- Create joint care plans that align care provider recommendations to priorities, wishes, and strengths of care recipients and their loved ones.
- Explain how care providers will work with care recipients and family caregivers to meet their respective goals.
- Incorporate feedback into service delivery wherever possible and communicate how feedback was integrated into programming.
- Provide opportunities for care recipients and providers to design and modify services by creating a role for them in organizational planning and operations.

Empowerment, Voice, & Choice

- Encourage care recipients to advocate for themselves and assert their needs and boundaries. Respect those needs and boundaries.
- Ensure participation in services is optional. If a service or procedure is required, explain why it is required.
- Obtain consent before initiating any services, procedures, or data collection.
- Provide services through a variety of service settings, times, and providers, allowing people to choose the best options for their care.

Cultural, Historical, & Other Considerations

- Consider the care recipient's preferences, cultural background, and identity when developing programming. Include these considerations in programmatic components such as food, music, or activities.
- Understand that cultural, ethnic, religious, and other communities are not homogenous.
- Ensure services and resources are in the preferred language of care recipients and family caregivers, and provide translation services when needed.
- Ensure skilled and empathetic supervision of staff and volunteers.

Personalization

- Create systems and policies that allow flexibility and customization.
- Engage in conversations to learn about care recipients to better understand their history, motivations, strengths, and wishes.
- Ask care recipients what is most meaningful to them in creating welcoming and safe environments.
- Ask family caregivers how they would like to be involved in their loved one's care, and include family caregivers as partners in care teams in accordance with care recipients' wishes.

Self-Determination

- Support care recipients, family caregivers, and staff in building self-esteem and confidence.
- Validate each individual's autonomy, agency, and values.
- Show respect and acceptance for an individual's decisions and preferences.
- Support others in developing self-advocacy skills to ensure their needs are heard and met.

Coordination

- Build relationships between providers and develop strong and holistic referral systems to better coordinate care.
- Develop strong partnerships among community leaders and organizations.
- Provide clear and accessible information about the range of services a care recipient can use.
- Improve care through cross-sector discussions among policy makers, community leaders, business, school, and community members.

Respect

- Listen actively and empathetically, allow care recipient time to gather thoughts and ask questions, and do not interrupt.
- Respond to feedback thoroughly and in a timely manner.
- Vocally acknowledge the strengths of colleagues, family caregivers, and care recipients.
- Enable everyone to observe religious or cultural practices by providing appropriate food for services, procedures, and events.

PCTI Essentials for Aging Services online course

To learn more about the PCTI approach and gain additional PCTI implementation strategies, enroll in *Person-Centered, Trauma-Informed Essentials for Aging Services*.

Developed by leaders in the PCTI approach, this course is designed to educate professionals and volunteers on the impact of trauma on health, aging, and service delivery and how the PCTI approach can help. As the gold standard in aging services, the PCTI approach ensures that all older adults and family caregivers have the care they need to thrive.

Whether you are a direct care worker, policy maker, community leader, organization executive, or family caregiver, this course offers invaluable insights and practical skills to enhance care for aging populations.

Join the PCTI movement today! Click the buttons to enroll.

Individual Learners: Sign Up Today!

Team Leaders: Register for Group Enrollment

For more information about course content, visit
https://holocaustsurvivorcare.jewishfederations.org/PCTI_training
or contact PCTItraining@JewishFederations.org.

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Additional Resources

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