

**Essential Element 2**  
**Your Role: Identify trauma-related needs of children and families**

**1) Identify trauma-related needs of children and families**

- Have immediate needs and concerns of the child and caregivers addressed:
  - What does the child say would help?
  - What does the caregiver say would help?
  - What does the resource family (if applicable) say would help?
- Ask whether the child has received:
  - A family assessment of strengths and needs?
  - A mental health screening?
  - A developmental screening?
  - A medical examination?
  - Other assessments?
- Within any screenings/assessments, gather a full picture of trauma exposure to the extent possible.
- Within any screenings/assessments, address the child and family's culture and history (including historical trauma).
- Review the outcomes of the screenings/assessments.
  - What are the next steps?
  - If relevant, are the services/interventions trauma-informed? Culturally relevant?
- If screenings/assessment have not been completed, address any barriers.
  - What have been some of the steps to mitigate the barriers?
- Gain a better understanding of the range of available programs and treatment approaches that are trauma-informed in your region.
- Request regular, ongoing screenings/assessments that include a trauma component.

**2) Communication**

- Engage the caregiver(s) and children in court discussion and decisions
- Ask for their ideas/suggestions on what will help their family

Avoid	Why is this important?
Court orders for screenings/assessments before considering input of child or caregiver it impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engagement of child and caregiver is important in change process</li> <li>• Giving choices helps balance power</li> <li>• Knowing what the child/caregiver has already done to try to solve the issue can help find future solutions</li> <li>• A child's and family's culture may impact the way they solve problems or view certain "problems"</li> </ul>

Avoid	Why is this important?
Court orders for therapy before knowing the outcomes of a screening/assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not all children/caregivers require therapy</li> <li>• Other interventions can be considered therapeutic</li> <li>• Consider the outcomes of the screening/assessment</li> <li>• Consider what the child / caregiver says would help</li> </ul>
Court orders for too many services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too many services can be overwhelming to a family</li> <li>• Focus on safety first; services do not equal safety</li> <li>• Services require thorough analysis of the need</li> <li>• Services may be informal</li> <li>• Interactions can be interventions</li> </ul>

**3) Court Processes**

- Continuously assess strengths and needs of the child and family
- Consider whether a new screenings/assessment should be completed
- Reevaluate the impact of trauma on the child/caregiver
  - Are there new concerns/behaviors?
  - Have there been any new potentially traumatic events?
- If a child needs to move placements, consider what additional needs may be present. Address who is responsible for meeting those needs.
- Consider how trauma is part of the case plan/case planning and court processes

**4) Court Environment**

- Remember the court can be an intimidating place for most and can be trauma reminders for some
- Remember that everyone wants the same thing – child safety, permanency and well-being
- Acknowledge and celebrate successes, even the smallest ones