Collaborative Action on Adversity, Trauma, & Resilience: Webinar Transcript



**PolicyWise for Children & Families presented a framework for collaborative action on adversity, trauma, and resilience in a webinar on December 10, 2020. Below is a transcript of the webinar, which includes the project background, introduction of the framework, an overview of the action areas and supporting structures, and opportunities for continued development of the framework.**

Introduction

Kelsey: My name is Kelsey Duebel and I am a Project Manager for PolicyWise for Children & Families.

Janine: And I am Janine Elenko and I am a Research and Evaluation Associate with PolicyWise.

K: And we just wanted to start off by recognizing what a challenging time it is that we are all in right now. A very strange time… and how timely this topic is. We know adversity, trauma, resilience is extremely relevant to what’s going on with individuals, families, and communities right now, so we hope that this webinar is useful for everybody. We also recognize resources are quite stretched right now so we really, really appreciate everybody attending this webinar or to view it afterwards. We’re very excited to share this work with all of you. We’ve been doing this project for just over a year. We’re presenting on behalf of a bigger team at PolicyWise that’s been involved in this work. We also really want to acknowledge the external service providers, experts, and academics that has advised us on this project and given us their wisdom and their perspectives on the issues that we’re going to be talking about today.

A little bit of housekeeping before we get started. This webinar is going to be recorded. We’re going to distribute it to all the registrants and then it’ll made public as well so feel free to distribute it as well. We also have some supporting materials that we’re going to be sending out with the webinar. And we have a full report if you’re interested then you can reach out and we’ll be happy to share that as well. We have pre-recorded the components of the webinar so we’ll be playing those and then pausing here and there to do some polling to get involvement from all of you. And lastly, we are not going to be doing a live Q&A due to the number of participants but we’re really interested to hear your perspectives, ideas, and comments so we’ll have our contact information available. We’d love for you to reach out and continue this conversation with you after the webinar.

We’re going to introduce PolicyWise for Children & Families for those who are not familiar. We are a non-profit organization based in Canada, Alberta. We exist to improve child, family, and community well-being by leading, creating, and mobilizing research and evaluation for evidence-informed policy and practice. So before we go into the presentation we just wanted to give you an opportunity to get a feel for who is in the audience. We have two polls here, just to kind of give an understanding… whatever is the most accurate representation of the field or sector you work in. Feel free to start voting or I guess filling out the poll and the position you hold. We think it’ll be quite interesting to see who we got in the room today. And I should note for those who are watching the recording of this presentation who aren’t with us live, Zoom will not allow us to record the actual poll so it’ll just be an actual break whenever we do a poll. It’ll be a little break for you since you won’t be able to see the polling yet as its happening. We have most people filled out the poll. I’ll give it a few more seconds. We’re very close to full response rate... I’ll end it here and share the results.

\*Poll: Field/Sector Attendees Work In\*

We’ve got a nice representation of quite a few different sectors. Child and family supports is a really high one which completely makes sense and lots of frontline services and managers but also representation from research and policy. Really excited to see this range of sectors and positions as the purpose of this webinar is focused around collaborative action and building on all that excellent work that we know is going on in relation to adversity, trauma, and resilience. I’ll stop sharing and we’re going to go into the first component of the presentation now.

Project Background

Kelsey: The purpose of the webinar today is to present a framework for collaborative action on adversity, trauma, and resilience. This framework involves some key action areas and supporting structures. We’re going to talk about some opportunities and propose some opportunities for further exploration and development of this work. Why is this framework important? We know that there is a ton of movement and activity happening in relation to adversity, trauma, and resilience across a really wide range of sectors, practitioners, and lots of different areas for alignment and coordination. We know that past and current coordination and alignment hasn’t always been there and hasn’t always been supported by evidence informed practice that is aligned direction on that. As well as, outcomes and reporting. We really see this framework for adversity, trauma, and resilience as an opportunity to support better alignment and coordination of all of the activity happening related to adversity, trauma, and resilience. Support more aligned and coordinated practice, guidance and implementation of initiatives, and then support or more of that common outcomes measurement and reporting so we can have that stronger more consistent evaluation. We can understand what kind of impact we’re having collectively on these common goals related to trauma, adversity, resilience, and we can continue to build upon that knowledge and evidence base.

In order to develop the framework, we’ve been working on this like I said, for just over a year. We did a variety of things to learn what was needed around what the current state was for adversity, trauma, and resilience. First, we learned from research. We did a pretty in depth literature review to approaches related to adversity, trauma, and resilience, including ACEs. So adverse childhood experiences. Part of that research and building on that research was engagement with experts. We talked to local and international researchers, policymakers and thought leaders to learn from their experience in the field and across a wide range of sectors related to the evidence, outcomes and some of the challenges in these areas. Finally, we talked to service providers from Alberta across a wide range of sectors including social serving agencies and the health sector, to learn from their experience practicing in this area, their approaches and what they learned. We took all of these data sources and all of this information together and from that, we developed the framework for collaborative action which is what we’re going to be talking about the rest of this webinar.

Introduction to the Framework

So we’re going to introduce the framework now. The first piece of the framework is the action areas on the adversity, trauma, and resilience. We identified three key areas of action. All of them are overlapping and interrelated. The first is knowledge and competency development. The second is identification and assessment. The third is prevention and intervention. And then the fourth is trauma informed practice of activity and action but also is really important to be woven through the other three areas. All of the action areas and the activity going on in those action areas can fall into a spectrum from general to specialized. With knowledge and competency, that can range from building general education on awareness with professionals to more specialized training and accreditation. Same with interventions, going from primary interventions and supports for resilience down to more specialized interventions. And finally, we identified some key supporting structures that are really important and needed to support all of that activity, alignment and coordination across all of those action areas. That’s the importance of having a core scope of practice, key principles, and a consistent strategic policy direction and evaluation. So we are going to talk about the action areas and the supporting structures in more detail. Now Janine is going to talk a little bit more about each of the action areas.

Action Areas

J: Thanks Kelsey. As we go through this next section that goes into a little bit of a closer look of the action areas, the key message that we have is that the action areas are interconnected and reinforce one another. Together, these action areas form the foundations on the approach on adversity, trauma, and resilience. The first action area is trauma informed practice. As Kelsey said, this action area is its own area of activity but is also woven through the other action areas that we’ll be going through.

Trauma informed practice can be understood as organizational teaches and practices that are focused on realizing the impact of trauma, that recognize the signs and symptoms of trauma, that then respond to that by integrating this knowledge of trauma into the way that they are practicing and into policy. All of this is with the goal of resisting traumatization. An example of trauma informed practice within the Alberta setting is Alberta Health Services’ trauma informed practice initiatives that are underway.

The second action area is knowledge and competency. This action area looks at awareness training and education initiatives that are focused on the impact of adversity and trauma and on the importance of supporting resilience. These activities build competency in translating knowledge into practice and behaviours. A couple of examples of knowledge and competency in Alberta is the Alberta Family Wellness’ Brain Story Certification and the community mental health training framework.

The third action area is identification and assessment. Activity under this area includes tools and approaches for identifying exposure to and the impacts of adversity and trauma. As well as identifying factors and resilience. An example of identification and assessment in Alberta is the CUPS Calgary Society Resilience Matrix.

The last action area is prevention and intervention. This action area is really quite broad as there is a lot of activity in a lot of different sectors that can be considered working towards preventing adversity and trauma and supporting wellbeing and resilience. These activities work to promote structural changes. Changes in policy at a broad level, as well as working towards supporting community and individuals while being in healthy childhood development. Examples of prevention and intervention work that is currently underway in Alberta includes the Children’s Services Wellbeing and Resiliency Matrix and the corresponding Miyo resource. The examples that I shared today are some examples that correspond to different sectors that came up in our engagement with Alberta service providers and stakeholders. However, this is by no means an exhaustive list of activities that are underway in Alberta. And of course, there’s lots of activity happening in other jurisdictions as well.

As we move forward in talking about the supportive structures that are a part of the framework, we really want to reinforce that all of these action areas are interrelated and overlapping, that they cross sectors. And that this interrelation is really important in understanding the big picture of what is happening in adversity, trauma, and resilience.

Great, alright, so now that we have gone through the different action areas that we identified through our work that are a part of this framework for collaborative action on adversity, trauma, and resilience, we want to take a moment to do another poll to learn more about which action areas you’re working in. You are able to select more than one choice, as we said, we recognize these action areas are quite interconnected and overlapped so select the primary areas you work in.

\*Poll: Action Areas\*

K: I don’t know if you can see it Janine… We’ve got about 75% voted so we’ll give it a few more seconds… That’s probably good I think. Great. I will end the poll and share the results.

J: Alright, so it’s great to kind of get a sense of what areas of work are represented among the group attending today. You can see there’s a lot of work happening in prevention and intervention as well as trauma-informed practice and a little bit less but a great representation of knowledge and competency and identification and assessment. So thank you for participating, it’s always great to get a sense of what areas are represented from the people that are listening today. Alright, so we’ll move on now to talk about the supporting structures.

Clear Scope of Practice

K: So we’re going to talk about the supporting structures now. The first supporting structure that we’re going to discuss is the Clear Scope of Practice. The key takeaway from this supporting structure is that defining scopes of practice and related roles and responsibilities is important to support coordination and collaboration of activity across adversity, trauma, and resilience. So looking at the general end of the spectrum, understanding that there is a lot of activity and professionals working in the space across the spectrum and really trying to understand what our roles and what our scopes of practice across that and how do we relate to each other. Looking at the general side, our understanding is that individuals who would fall on this end of the spectrum have general interactions and provide a wide range of supports for youth and families through their roles. This can include teachers, coaches, elders and knowledge keepers, all different kinds of providers that have interactions with the general public, communities, and individuals. These professionals work in a range of settings across public and private life. This includes schools, primary health care settings, child care settings, and recreation. Looking at their scope of practice and their role within the spectrum of activity on adversity, trauma, and resilience, when it comes to their knowledge and competency development, it’s really important that they have a general education, knowledge, and awareness of the impact of adversity and trauma on individuals and the importance of supporting resilience. And so through their roles, they might observe and identify individuals who are experiencing adversity or trauma are showing signs that they might be or expressing needs for supports essentially in relation to adversity and trauma. It is important that they are able to observe and identify those individuals’ circumstances and also connect it to professionals across the spectrum that they can then support those individuals to reach more specialized service providers. Their role is really important on that primary prevention side of activity and supporting wellbeing and resilience for individuals and communities and families.

So moving across the spectrum, towards the more focused scope of practice, these individuals have general trauma skills and practice related to trauma and adversity as essential to their role. This is because through their roles they tend to interact with those who are higher risk or those individuals who have experienced adversity and trauma. Those can include social workers, first responders, police officers, individuals in corrections and that kind of thing. As I said, those individuals work with populations who are or had experienced adversity and trauma or expressing and experiencing the impact on their health and social outcomes that can be related to experiences with adversity and trauma. They work in settings where individuals tend to access if they are more at risk or if they are in need of supports. They connect with social services, mental health supports, addiction supports, emergency and hospitals. These professionals come back to the spectrum on adversity, trauma, and resilience. They tend to have more focused development and training related to adversity, trauma, and resilience. Depending on their role, they might be more involved in assessing and screening individuals to exposure and impacts of trauma or depending on where they are in that role, they also might not be involved in that but might be important for them to refer that individual to different professionals who do that. Their role is really more focused around that early intervention and targeted intervention.

On the most specialized end of the spectrum is where we have professionals who have specialized trauma skills who require accreditation or professional membership to practice. This can include clinical social workers, clinical psychologists, and trauma specialists. They really work with individuals who have severe health and social outcomes related to trauma. For example, treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These professionals, while they’re very specialized, they can work in a range of settings including more general settings like schools and hospitals or they can also work in more specialized settings. As I said, they’re really more on that end of specialized clinical intervention and that specialized training and education as well. The important thing about looking at this spectrum and understanding the scopes of practice is so that the range of practitioners, policymakers, and individuals working in this area can understand where their scope of practice is so they can relate and connect and align with the other professionals in the scope of practice across the spectrum.

K: So we’re going to pause again for another poll. This is in relation to the spectrum and the scopes of practice that we just talked about. We’re really interested to see where… and recognizing that of course the scopes of practice range and can overlap a bit but yeah, where you see yourself along that spectrum.

\*Poll: Scope of practice\*

We’ll give you a couple more seconds here… So we’ve got a representation across the spectrum here with a little bit more representation in that focused scope which makes sense given the child and family sector that we’re seeing and it does fit within that focused scope having a pretty central part of your role being connected with that general and specialized side. So thank you for participating in that. And we are going to move into the next piece of the presentation which is focused on the next supporting structure which is common principles.

Common Principles

J: Alright, so we are going to talk about the common principles that emerged from the engagement and research work that we did. The key message through this section is that common principles are important to align approaches and mitigate unintended harm through activity on adversity, trauma, and resilience. The first common principle is to acknowledge the variables that influence the pathway from adversity to outcomes. There is a known relationship between adversity, trauma, and health and social outcomes. However, it is important to acknowledge that adversity does not create negative outcomes. There is a need in practice, research, and policy to recognize and meaningfully incorporate other factors that influence the pathway from adverse experiences to outcomes. These other factors include additional risk and protective factors, resilience, social and cultural context, genetics and biology, as well as the overall context of exposure. And it’s important to note that these factors exist at individual, family, community, and societal level. This principle is the foundation for the other two principles that we will talk about and all the other activity along that general to specialized supports and services.

The second principle is to focus on resilience and protective factors. This principle points to a strength based approach. An example of how it can look in practice is through identification and assessment looking beyond adversity and trauma to include resilience and protective factors and then drawing on individual family or community strengths when planning and providing services.

The third and last common principle is to be responsive to context in order to practice ethically and mitigate harm. We recognize that there is potential for unintended harm at the individual community and systems level and an ethical obligation to mitigate that harm in practice related to policy. An important part of this is being responsive to the social and cultural contexts that adversity occurs in. An example of this is through identification and assessment tools and approaches and through the supports and services that are provided in response to make sure that they are culturally appropriate and culturally rooted. Another example of frontline service providers is to really have that understanding where your scope of practice is and then how to help people navigate through the system to receive appropriate supports and services. So if your scope of practice is in observing and identifying people who could benefit from additional assessment and supports, to know the appropriate person to refer to, and then through those supports and services to be provided in an appropriate and timely way. I will now pass it back over to Kelsey to talk about the final supporting structure.

Consistent Strategic Policy Direction and Evaluation

K: Thank you Janine. The final supporting structure that we identified is Consistent Strategic Policy Direction & Evaluation. The key takeaway from this supporting structure is that there is a need for stronger evidence, coordinated policy, and improved evaluation of adversity, trauma, and resilience approaches. At a high level, what we found in our research is that evidence-based really varies across the different action areas related to adversity, trauma, and resilience. Some areas of intervention have much more established evidence around effective practice and producing positive outcomes in clients through interventions, whereas other areas are much more in an emerging stage of producing evidence and understanding what works and how to achieve outcomes. We also found that strategic policy direction tends to be sector specific. There is a need for strategic policy direction across adversity, trauma, and resilience to really span sectors but it does tend to focus on specific sectors or areas. So policy focusing on early childhood development, child and family supports, youth mental health, or addictions recovery. There’s lots of opportunity to build that cross sector policy direction and continue to respond to the recognized need to align and coordinate this policy. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, this is also emerging in a lot of areas where practitioners and service providers are continuing to monitor, evaluate, and to learn what works and what is producing outcomes. At the same time, this monitoring and evaluation doesn’t tend to happen at a cross sector level or across different action areas. Common outcome measurement is generally not occurring. It tends to be more program specific or sector specific. We really see this framework for collaborative action as a key opportunity to build those supporting structures and address some of these challenges related to continuing to build towards more consistent evaluation and consistent strategic policy direction. As well as building on those common principles that we discussed and clarifying scopes of practice and roles and responsibilities across the spectrum and within the framework.

K: Alright, we’ve got one final poll for you. As we talked about with those supporting structures for the framework to really have that alignment and coordination across sectors and across areas of action, we’re interested to poll you on what are the top priorities or what is the highest priority going forward to support that alignment and coordination. We’ve listed our four supporting structures here and absolutely recognizing there might be other priorities too, where we definitely want to hear from you on those and encourage you to reach out to us if you think there are other priorities beyond these structures. But out of what we have here, we’d be really interested to see where you find the most value for priorities going forward.

\*Poll: Priority Supporting Structures\*

K: Alright, we’ll give you a couple more seconds here. Okay, I’m going to end the polling and share the results. This is really great to see that all of them resonate because we think that they’re all important as well and definitely interconnected. The outcomes measurement and evaluation is really showing as the top priority for people. This is interesting because this project actually started as an evaluation project and then we realized how much supporting structures are needed as well but there is definitely a need for outcomes measurement and evaluation as it is a really important one. I will stop sharing that and will hand it over to Janine to talk about some concrete next steps that we’ve identified around exploring those priorities and opportunities.

Opportunities and Conclusion

J: Thanks Kelsey. As we’ve gone through the different components of the framework on collaborative action on adversity, trauma, and resilience, you may be wondering what some of the next steps or action that you can take to continue bringing this work into practice or moving this work forward. Through our research and our group of partners, we’ve identified some activities to help you move the framework out as well as implementing it and bringing it into different sections and geographical areas. These activities include further engagement with partners. As we’ve said throughout the presentation, we know that there is a vast array of activity occurring so that engagement piece is really important to continue understanding the current state of activities in the areas of trauma-informed practice, identification and assessment, knowledge and competency, and prevention and intervention. To be able to then inform those key next steps moving forward. Another area of action or opportunity is to share learnings from practice and research. It is important for people who are in frontline service provider decisions or policymaking decisions to have that understanding of what is being learnt from research and to continue growing that knowledge base and trauma informed practices. And also understanding of what is working well in practice. That touches on that final opportunity which is to formalize ways of working across sectors. I know there are areas of activities where this is working really well and also areas for continued strengthening in that cross-sectoral work. But as we’ve said throughout this, there is activity happening in a variety of sectors like health and education and family services and justice. So lots of opportunities to learn from each other and continue building on the work that is being done. Overall, the goal of all these opportunities is to work on developing and strengthening those supporting structures of aligning practice guidance, strengthening evaluation and monitoring outcomes… which was definitely identified by this group as a priority area and then to coordinate that cross-sector policy. We want to thank everyone for taking the time out of what I’m sure are very busy days to attend our webinar today. We hope that after hearing about the framework that you are excited like we are to continue building and strengthening the work that is currently underway. Like Kelsey said at the beginning, we are not doing a live Q&A time, but we don’t want this to be the end of the conversation. We do really want to hear from you. If you have questions or comments for our presentation today or also if you have any ideas for work moving forward or how the framework could be used or like Kelsey said, additional supporting structures… or ways that you want to collaborate or partner with us, please reach out to either Kelsey or myself and we’d really like to continue this conversation.

K: As Janine said, we’re really excited about this work and the potential of this work and so we’re really looking for partners and other stakeholders and service providers and individuals in this field that are interested in continuing to build this framework out and operationalize it and take it on to the ground. Really appreciate everybody taking the time and taking this time to learn about our work and engage with us. We really encourage everyone to reach out. Like I said in the beginning, we’ll be following up with a recording of this webinar. We’re going to transcribe it but it might take a little bit longer, but just in case that’s a more accessible way to access it and then some supporting materials which is really what this webinar is based on. There’s a lot of work behind this so we’re very happy to share that with you all and we really hope to hear from you in the future. Thank you very much.