

Risking Connection®: A Training Curriculum for Working with Survivors of Childhood Abuse

Description: Risking Connection® is a theoretically sophisticated, accessible treatment and response framework guided by a manual. It helps providers develop optimally helpful responses to trauma survivors through a comprehensive contextual foundation for trauma informed services. The focus of the program on the impact of the work on the helping professional, and from teaching providers to understand and use their own reactions productively, supports decreased levels of stress and burnout for providers.

Risking Connection® for Working with Survivors of Childhood Abuse is used in many states as workforce development for all levels of staff and providers of care to persons who have survived trauma and in diverse settings and fields including corrections, substance abuse, child residential and developmental disabilities. This includes non-degreed direct care workers as well as workers with advanced degrees, and front line staff. Please note that Risking Connection® is a core model which has contextual adaptations for different audiences (see “Additional Contextual Adaptations”).

Modules in the version for use for those providing clinical services—and time frames—may be used flexibly and selectively. Modules include:

- ☞ Understanding Trauma is the First Step;
- ☞ Using Connections to Develop Treatment Goals with Survivor Clients;
- ☞ Keeping a Trauma Framework When Responding to Crises and Life-Threatening Behaviors;
- ☞ Working with Dissociation and Staying Grounded: Self-Awareness as a Tool for Clients and Helpers;
- ☞ Vicarious Traumatization and Integration: Putting It All Together.

This five module, 20-hour curriculum from Sidran Institute is guided by a manual and offers assessment, self-reflection, group discussion, and clinical practice exercises, making it interactive and experiential. The manual also contains client and provider worksheets. Modules used and time frame are flexible.

Risking Connection® was developed by the Sidran Institute. Karen W. Saakvitne, Ph.D. and Laurie Anne Pearlman and their colleagues at the Trauma Research, Education, and Training Institute, Inc. (TREATI) wrote the text with input from an editorial board consisting of other helping professionals and trauma survivors with extensive experience in state mental health systems, clinical treatments of traumatic stress conditions, curriculum design, and the law.

Additional contexted adaptations. In collaboration with the International Conference of War Veteran Ministers, Risking Connection® has been adapted for use by leaders of faith communities who wish to acknowledge the presence of and better relate to trauma survivors in their congregations (see entry for Risking Connection® in Faith Communities). Other contextual adaptations in progress focus on domestic violence settings, military families, and providers of primary health care.

Status of Research: Unpublished one-year post training survey of Risking Connection® users in New York and Massachusetts completed in August 2002 reported high levels of satisfaction with the increase in ability to help trauma survivors in a variety of treatment settings. Over 90% of respondents gave Risking Connection® training credit for “improving my effectiveness as a treatment provider”, “empowered me to help clients address symptoms and work toward more effective methods of coping”, and “boosting my enthusiasm and levels of hope regarding working with trauma survivors.”

Evaluation for Risking Connection® use in a trauma-informed HIV prevention project in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Psychiatry, Center for School Mental Health Services, Maryland State Department of Education, and Maryland State AIDS Administration has been completed. Evaluation was highly positive for Risking Connection’s role in contextualizing the childhood trauma antecedents to drug use, unsafe

sex, and other risk-taking behavior which may lead to HIV.

Evaluation has been designed and funded in partnership with St. Vincent's Center, a Catholic Charities residential treatment facility for children and adolescents who are suffering from the trauma of child abuse and neglect. Training of residential staff is in progress.

Research has been designed, submitted, and is pending National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding in partnership with Georgetown Center for Trauma and the Community, Georgetown University Medical School, for use of Risking Connection® in an urban primary care setting.

Evaluation has been designed and proposal submitted to SAMHSA by the Klingberg Family Centers, in New Britain, CT for a NCTSN level 3 site using Sidran Institute's Risking Connection® model in three Connecticut child treatment facilities.

Contact Information: To learn more, or to schedule a training event, contact:

Esther Giller at Sidran Institute

410-825-8888, ext. 207

esther.giller@sidran.org

www.sidran.org

To read more about Risking Connection, or to order:

http://www.sidran.org/store/index.cfm?fuseaction=product.display&product_id=121