

TALKING TO THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR ABOUT TRAUMA

What is trauma?

Trauma is a very scary or upsetting event or a group of events that changes how a person reacts to stress. These types of events make people feel afraid or in danger even once the scary event has passed. Some examples of an event that may cause trauma are death of a family member, divorce, or losing your home to a building fire and moving to a shelter. Trauma can also happen when a person is abused by another person, in a physical, mental, or emotional way.

When a child has gone through trauma, they may have trouble dealing with some events or situations for the rest of their life. Trauma can change a child's behavior, how they relate to other people, and the way they react to everyday events. A child who has gone through trauma can sometimes even have health problems as they become an adult. The good news is children can bounce back from trauma, to improved health and behavior, if they receive help to talk about what happened!

Why should I talk to my child's school counselor or social worker about trauma?

There are many ways to communicate your needs with the school counselor or any other school staff (Social Worker, Parent Coordinator, Teacher...). It is important that you find one school staff person that you feel comfortable talking to when sharing personal information. You can also choose a preferred form of communication. Example: Email, Text, Phone Call, Video Conference, and Face to Face.

We recommend school counselors and guidance counselors because they understand how trauma can affect children and families. They are trained to work with students and families who have gone through trauma. They will work with families and children to create plans of support for school, home, and temporary residency. School counselors can also provide your family with resources that can help you.

What should I ask my child's school counselor?

- Something happened at our residency that involved my child. I'm not sure how much they saw or heard. It seems to be bothering them and sometimes they don't express their feelings to me. Ever since, they've been acting up and doing things that are not like them. I don't usually talk about my personal business, but I'm not sure what to do. I want to know if I should tell the teacher. What should I say or not say?
- What can I do to help my child stay on track in school while all this is going on?
- I want to help my child manage their behavior outside of and in school. Can you help me make a plan?

TIPS FOR TALKING TO YOUR CHILD'S SCHOOL COUNSELOR

It can be hard to talk to the school counselor or guidance counselor about trauma. It is a personal topic. Here are some tips to help you plan for the meeting.

- **Use "I" statements.**
An "I" statement means starting a sentence with "I."
Example: "I have trouble managing my child's behavior at home."
Using "I" statements will help the guidance counselor know how they can help you and your family.
- **List your talking points.**
It is a great idea to write a list of your questions and concerns. Do this before you talk with the guidance counselor. This will help you keep the meeting on track. It will also help you remember everything that you want to say or ask.