COVID-19 Response and Recovery Toolkit:
Educating and Engaging Congress on the Necessity of a
Trauma-Informed Response (Prepared July 13, 2020)

Call to Action – Week of July 13

Please complete this Call to Action during the week of July 13th:

Your U.S. Senators must hear from you, their constituent, about ways in which the pandemic is causing overwhelming stress and trauma in your state, and the impact that has on children of all ages, families, and other adults in children’s lives (child care providers, teachers, grandparents). The National Trauma Campaign is here to support your outreach and advocacy.

Key Message:
Include funding for trauma-related programs and approaches in upcoming federal legislation responding to the pandemic.

Policy Requests:
1. Increase funding for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN).
2. Increase funding for Project AWARE.
3. Additional support for school mental health & trauma-informed programs.
5. Establish local-based coordinating bodies to address the impact of stress and trauma in their communities.

Steps to take:

1. Prepare an example(s) or story.
   Think of an example(s) or story that illustrates the traumatic impact the pandemic is causing in your community/population you serve and/or state. These stories will be of the greatest importance to them. You may find examples or stories from within your organization, by talking with public agency staff, the news, etc. If you need help or further guidance on this, please email info@traumacampaign.org.

For this Call to Action, your goals are:

- Initiate or build on your personal relationship with a Senate staffer in each of your two U.S. Senate offices.
- Share information with the staffer on traumatic experiences the pandemic is causing in your state.
- Ask the Senator to support your policy request.
- Provide supporting information to the staffer.
- Ensure the staffer has communicated your ask to the Senator.
2. Communicate with your staff point of contact in both of your U.S. Senate offices.
   Using the template email on page 3, email the staffer with whom you have developed a relationship in each of your U.S. Senate offices.

   If you have a point of contact but have never personally introduced yourself, please do your best to have a conversation with that staff person to introduce yourself, your organization or network, and the reasons you believe in applying the science of trauma and resilience to federal policy.

   If you haven’t already identified a point of contact, call the main line of your U.S. Senate offices and ask for the name and contact information for the staffer who works on child and family, trauma, and/or mental health policy. This is the person you want to develop a relationship and open line of communication with. As an individual constituent, you have two U.S. Senators. To identify your two U.S. Senators, as well as links to their contact information and website, follow this link - Find your U.S. Senator.

   If you need help or further guidance on this, please email info@traumacampaign.org.

3. Use Campaign tools to make your outreach easy.
   Use the National Trauma Campaign’s COVID-19 advocacy tools in your email to Senate offices.

   For your email outreach, this Toolkit provides:
   - Template email to your U.S. Senator (see page 3)
   - Recommended Campaign infographic
   - A three-minute video and companion infographic on the COVID-19 and the science of trauma and resilience
   - National sign-on letter from the Child Trauma and ACES Policy Work Group (CTAP)

4. OPTIONAL: Engage in media activities.
   - Use the sample social media messages in this Toolkit (see page 5).
   - Write an op-ed for your local newspaper, respond to a related article in the news or op-ed with a Letter to the Editor, or
   - pitch the topic to a policy news blogger and offer local (you) and national (the Campaign) interviewees and perspective.

   The template email to send to your Senators follows on the next page.
Template Email to your Senators

If this is your first communication with your congressional office, you can use the following template to introduce yourself. If you already have made the connection with a staffer, feel free to modify this template accordingly.

Dear Senator [INSERT LAST NAME]:

I am writing as your constituent to urge you to be a champion for responding to the mental and behavioral health needs of children, families, and communities affected by the traumatic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. [[If you are writing on behalf of an organization] I represent INSERT NAME AND BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF YOUR ORGANIZATION].

On behalf of the hundreds of advocates, practitioners, and researchers who join [me – or - INSERT YOUR ORGANIZATION'S NAME] as part of the National Trauma Campaign, I am asking you to include funding for programs and approaches that are specifically intended to equip communities to stabilize child and family well-being as they are impacted by the traumatic effects of the pandemic.

The uncertainty, anxiety, isolation, and economic insecurity from the COVID-19 pandemic are traumatic experiences that can cause long-term health consequences, if not addressed. Research from past disasters shows that children are particularly negatively impacted by disaster, with the potential for lifelong consequences for their physical and mental health, as well as for their educational achievement.

[OPTIONAL: In a few sentences, describe how you are seeing the effects of trauma in your state, community or organization right now.]

We know that directly supporting trauma-informed and responsive approaches and programs across all public systems that come in contact with children and families - like education, child welfare, health care, workforce, law enforcement, courts - can and will mitigate the negative impacts of overwhelming stress and help them thrive now and beyond the pandemic.

As you consider additional legislative responses to the pandemic, children and families in [INSERT YOUR STATE] need you to:

1. Increase funding for the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) by at least $10 million. This will support efforts to bring much-needed trauma-informed supports to more communities.

2. Increase funding for Project AWARE by at least $100 million. Project AWARE assists schools [include an example from your state if applicable] to implement trauma-informed initiatives and mental health supports for students.

3. Fund additional grants to local education agencies and Head Start providers. P.L. 115-271 (The SUPPORT for Patients and Communities Act) created new grants to expand evidence-based trauma support services in schools. The law
authorizes the Secretary of Education to make grants to link educational agencies with mental health systems to increase student access to services. We urge you to include $50 million for these grants to help mitigate the impact of trauma that many of our students are enduring as a result of the pandemic.

4. Provide $1 million to fund the Federal Interagency Task Force on child trauma. Section 7132 of P.L. 115-271 (SUPPORT Act) created an Interagency Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care that was directed to identify, evaluate, and make recommendations around the most effective programs and ways in which Federal agencies can better coordinate to improve the Federal response to families impacted by substance use disorders and other forms of trauma. With additional federal resources, including many flexible funding streams, flowing into states and communities, the work of the Task Force is more important than ever.

5. Include and fund Section 101 of the bipartisan RISE from Trauma Act (S. 1770) which would establish local-based coordinating bodies to address the impact of stress and trauma in communities.

These recommendations are supported by national organizations participating in the Child Trauma and ACES Policy Work Group. Read more here.

Our country has faced unexpected tragedies before, but few, if any, have been so far reaching and touched so many so suddenly. For children, we know many of the consequences of what’s happening now will not be immediately visible, but they could be lifelong if we don’t act. By addressing trauma now, and preventing further trauma and violence through strategies that strengthen families and communities and promote social connection and well-being, we can ensure that our children will be able to thrive and succeed once the physical health crisis is contained.

[Optional: For further information and background, here is a three-minute video and infographic that covers the science of trauma, and an infographic on how addressing trauma can improve lives.]

I am happy to answer any questions you may have about these recommendations and welcome the opportunity to work with you to more fully understand the value they have for the children and families in our state. Please feel free to contact me at [INSERT YOUR EMAIL and PHONE NUMBER].

Sincerely,

[YOUR NAME]
[YOUR ORGANIZATION if applicable]
Sample Social Media Messages

@YourSenator As your constituent, I urge you to incorporate a #TraumaInformed lens when creating policies to respond to #COVID19. We can target overwhelming #stress, thwart re-traumatization, and foster #resilience to emerge as a stronger, healthier nation. #TransformTrauma

@YourSenator As a constituent, I urge you to support the health and wellbeing of children/families by increasing funding for @NCTSN to provide #TraumaInformed supports to [YOUR TWO-LETTER STATE ABBREVIATION]'s vulnerable communities impacted by the pandemic. #CTIPP #TransformTrauma

@YourSenator As a voter, I urge you to increase funding for @SAMHSA’s Project AWARE to strengthen the implementation of trauma-informed school-based initiatives & mental health supports for children in response to #COVID19. #CTIPP #TransformChildhoodTrauma https://www.samhsa.gov/grants/grant-announcements/sm-18-006

@YourSenator #COVID19 is ushering in a costly #MentalHealth crisis for our children. As a [YOUR TWO-LETTER STATE ABBREVIATION] voter, I urge you to help build healthy, #resilient futures by funding grants that expand evidence-based trauma & mental health supports in schools. #CTIPP #TransformChildhoodTrauma

@YourSenator As a voter in [YOUR TWO-LETTER STATE ABBREVIATION], I urge you to increase funding for the Federal Interagency Task Force on Trauma-Informed Care to provide evidence-based supports to families impacted by substance use disorders and other forms of trauma during #COVID (and beyond). #TransformTrauma

@YourSenator As a voter in [YOUR TWO-LETTER STATE ABBREVIATION], I want you to know how important it is that you support Sec. 101 of the bipartisan RISE from Trauma Act to help address the unique impact #COVID19-related stress and trauma are having on our state. #CTIPP #TransformTrauma https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/s1770/BILLS-116s1770is.pdf

Please contact the National Trauma Campaign Core Team at info@traumacampaign.org for assistance with any part of this Call to Action.