Trauma-Informed Care Checklist for Early Childhood Educators

Quick-Checklist

- ☐ Children feel physically and emotionally safe.
- ☐ Secure relationships are prioritized over compliance.
- ☐ Educators seek to understand children's behavior.
- ☐ Staff welcome families as funds of knowledge.
- ☐ Educators respond calmly and consistently to children.
- ☐ Diversity and culture are respected.
- ☐ Educators support children's autonomy.
- ☐ Educator wellbeing is upheld on an institutional level.
- ☐ Educators are highly skilled and/or receive ongoing professional training.

Relationships

- ☐ Educators intentionally build positive relationships with children.
- ☐ Staff are responsive to children.
- ☐ Children's emotions are positively acknowledged and validated.
- ☐ Children are supported in repairing relationships after conflict.

- ☐ Staff encourage empathy, kindness, and cooperation.
- ☐ Educators notice and focus on children's strengths and interests.
- ☐ Each child has at least one trusted adult in the program.
- ☐ Children know who they can go to when they need help.
- ☐ Staff consistently use warm, respectful language in the classroom.
- ☐ Adults respond calmly to children.

Routine

- ☐ Children and families are greeted warmly each day.
- ☐ A predictable and consistent daily routine is maintained.
- ☐ The schedule is accessible to both children and families through pictures and words.
- ☐ Transitions are announced before they occur.
- ☐ Unnecessary or frequent transitions are minimized.
- ☐ Changes to the schedule are communicated clearly to children.
- ☐ Classroom expectations are explicitly taught.
- ☐ Classroom rituals are consistent.
- ☐ Children know where supplies and materials belong.
- ☐ Staff connect with families on a regular basis to discuss children's emotional wellbeing.

Environment

- ☐ Includes quiet, calm spaces for children to go when they are overstimulated.
- ☐ Educators avoid yelling, shaming, sarcasm, or threats.
- ☐ Classroom avoids overstimulation: lights, noises

- ☐ Educators co-regulate before expecting self-regulation.
- ☐ Children receive adequate physical stimulation.
- ☐ Children are granted access to natural environments and materials regularly.
- ☐ Calming materials are available and accessible to children.
- ☐ Adults spend one-on-one time with children regularly.

Regulation and Behavioral Support

- ☐ Children are offered choices whenever possible.
- ☐ Educators provide children with language to express their emotions.
- ☐ Educators employ calming strategies with children.
- ☐ Adults read and discuss books about emotions regularly.
- ☐ Children practice breathing exercises.
- ☐ Educators provide children with conflict resolution support.
- ☐ Educators employ natural and logical consequences.
- ☐ Positive interactions outnumber corrective interactions.

Cultural Responsiveness

- ☐ Children's home languages and cultures are honored.
- ☐ Books and materials in the classroom reflect diverse cultures, not only those represented in the class.
- ☐ Educators incorporate the lived experiences of children into the classroom.
- ☐ Educators reflect on their own personal biases.
- ☐ Educators participate in culturally responsive teaching and learning training.

- ☐ The daily schedule is provided through pictures and words, including multiple languages.
- ☐ Multiple languages are appreciated within the classroom.

Inclusivity

- ☐ Individual needs are asked about and understood.
- ☐ Children with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations.
- ☐ Children are offered multiple ways to participate and interact with peers and materials in the classroom.
- ☐ Educators support children and families in connecting with appropriate resources.

Communication Styles

Adults consistently:

- ☐ Speak in a calm, respectful tone.
- ☐ Use language children can understand.
- ☐ Offer choices.
- ☐ Explain expectations clearly.
- ☐ Allow children time to respond.
- ☐ Avoid power struggles.
- ☐ Connect before correct.
- ☐ Use positive descriptive affirmations.
- ☐ Communicate openly with families.

Family Partnerships

- ☐ Staff intentionally seek to build relationships with families.
- ☐ Families are welcome and treated with respect.
- ☐ Home cultures and languages are incorporated into the classroom.
- ☐ Educators provide multiple ways for families to engage.
- ☐ Educators supply classroom materials in various languages.
- ☐ Educators are available for families to contact for support regarding their child.

Educator Attitudes and Behaviors

- ☐ Educators utilize reflective practice.
- ☐ Educators seek to understand behavior rather than control it.
- ☐ Challenging behaviors are viewed as communication.
- ☐ Adults provide positive acknowledgement and reinforcement.
- ☐ Staff maintain professional boundaries.
- ☐ Educators maintain a growth mindset when considering children's abilities.

Educator Wellness

- ☐ Educator wellness is supported by adequate compensation.
- ☐ Staff have opportunities to rest/take breaks.
- ☐ Educators are able to recognize signs of compassion fatigue and respond appropriately.
- ☐ Staff practice regular self-care.
- ☐ Educators support each other.
- ☐ Staff receive ongoing professional development training.

SCORING

90-100%: Strong implementation of trauma-informed practices.

75-89%: Solid foundation with opportunities for improvement.

50-74%: Moderate incorporation of trauma-informed practice; identify areas for improvement.

Below 50: For a strong trauma-informed approach, consider developing an action plan utilizing this checklist.

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