



TRAUMA IS AN INTERGENERATIONAL EXPERIENCE; RESILIENCE CAN BE TOO: AN INTEGRATED, 2GEN APPROACH TO ADDRESSING TRAUMA

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At the Colorado State University (CSU) Center for Family and Couple Therapy, experience has taught us that, more often than not, trauma — experiences that are overwhelming and create real or perceived threats of harm or loss — is an intergenerational experience. Potentially traumatic events can include what is traditionally considered maltreatment (e.g., sexual, physical, and/or emotional abuse or neglect) as well as exposure to violence, familial substance abuse, multiple separations from caregivers, frequent moves or homelessness, and exposure to sexual activity. We have seen evidence that inclusion of family is essential to successful healing, so for years, we have addressed trauma from a systems perspective. The challenges we face do not happen in isolation.

Through a partnership with the Larimer County Department of Human Services to build trauma-informed care practices in the county, we created the Child Trauma and Resilience Assessment Center (CTRAC) to meld our systems approach with an innovative trauma assessment model that was changing lives. The center has been so successful that we started to work with organizations statewide to support healing at the family level and work toward the prevention of future maltreatment. Our goal is to build a deeper understanding of the ways in which trauma has impacted families and recommend targeted and unique treatment modalities to help build components of resilience (relatedness, regulation, and mastery). But this model should not be ours alone. Intergenerational, trauma-informed care should be embraced and implemented across systems that work with young people and their families in Colorado. So we endeavored to do just that — to build partnerships across agencies and organizations to provide integrated, 2Gen, trauma-informed care to their constituencies.

The first milestone in this effort was to establish CTRAC as a trusted provider of 2Gen, trauma-informed care. CTRAC has grown into a hub for training and educating on 2Gen, trauma-informed care and facilitating partnerships among agencies to help them integrate components of 2Gen, trauma-informed care for those they serve. In 2015, we joined a consortium of seven Colorado counties that was awarded a five-year grant from SAMHSA (Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration) to support our work in creating trauma-informed communities and meet a goal of reducing congregate care placement. In three years, we have conducted over

400 assessments across the seven counties. Alongside those assessments, we have conducted trainings for case workers, supervisors, therapists, attorneys, judges, law enforcement officers, congregate care facilities, and other agencies in 10 Colorado counties; consulted with Colorado's Division of Youth Services, Denver Public Schools, and Denver Human Services' 2GO Kinship Program; and are in conversation with the University of Colorado School of Medicine's Kemp Center about contracting to offer training and education on the approach statewide. And to train the next generation of providers in 2Gen, trauma-informed care, CTRAC serves as a training rotation for graduate students in CSU's Marriage and Family Therapy program.

We also wanted to expand our work to develop and implement a family assessment protocol and conduct research to establish our work as a promising practice. To date, we have begun to collect and analyze data on our child assessments and have piloted and approved an adult trauma screening tool. We are in the process of developing an adult component to the assessment model. We are also partnering with local agencies to apply for grants and, together with Specialized Alternatives for Youth (SAFY) and the Larimer County Economic and Workforce Development Center, were recently awarded a 2GO grant from Colorado to develop a family trauma assessment and treatment protocol. After discussing our partnerships at the 2018 Colorado Child Welfare Conference, we were invited to present our work on building trauma-informed communities through conducting trauma assessments and leading community training activities at the Dee Norton Advocacy Center's Charleston Child Trauma Conference in South Carolina in the fall of 2017 and 2018.

To realize our ultimate goal of getting the field at large to embrace and implement 2Gen, trauma-informed care, we recognize the need to inspire mindset shifts that move people away from diagnosis-based funding philosophies and traditional, behavioral models of treatment to prevention-based funding philosophies and 2Gen, trauma-informed and strength-based treatment models. But we also recognize the urgency of providing children and families with a model of care that employs a systems approach — recognizing that traumatic events do not happen in isolation — and spans generations to address potential root causes or negative externalities. As we endeavor to address the two together, we are encouraged by the enthusiasm across Colorado and the nation around 2Gen, trauma-informed care.



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Stephanie Seng currently serves as the director of the Center for Marriage and Family Therapy at Colorado State University, where she manages their community-based therapy center. She is also the director and one of the founders of the University's Child Trauma and Resilience Assessment Center, which provides extensive assessments and recommendations for children across the state who have experienced complex trauma.

"The magic of the Ascend Fellowship was the way it connected us. We began as separate professionals with individual goals to help children and families in Colorado. Through the fellowship, we developed profound and lasting friendships, each of us deeply invested in supporting the incredible work of the others and partnering toward common goals. The fellowship made my life richer, both personally and professionally."