



Development and Pilot of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Trauma-Informed Juvenile Court Self-Assessment

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ABSTRACT

Trauma-informed practices in the juvenile justice system are increasingly recognized as effective for promoting public safety through case management, rehabilitation, and treatment that is responsive to a traumatic event exposure and current trauma reactions. As court systems explore integration of trauma-informed practices, tools for identifying best practices and strategically implementing trauma-informed approaches are integral for judges and court administrators aiming to develop trauma-informed courts. The current paper reviews the National Child Traumatic Stress Network's development of the Trauma-Informed Juvenile Court Self-Assessment (TI-JCSA). Implications for self-guided strategies to shift court practices and policies to align with trauma-informed approaches will be discussed.

Key words: trauma, self-assessment, essential elements, strategic planning.

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The impact of traumatic events on the lives of youth involved with the justice system has gained increased attention during the past decade as justice professionals understanding of traumatic stress responses has expanded (Listenbee et al., 2012). These traumatic stress reactions have significant implications for whether youth interface with the justice system, penetrate deeper if presently justice-involved, and navigate their communities following release from justice settings. The current paper reviews the broader context which has contributed to the development of trauma-informed courts and introduces a court self-assessment tool that will facilitate courts integrating trauma-informed practices into current processes and procedures. The Trauma-Informed Juvenile Court-Self-Assessment (TI-JCSA: Cruise, Howard, Pickens & Halladay-Goldman, 2019) represents a collaborative effort between the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) and the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). The TI-JCSA is grounded in the eight *Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System* (NCTSN, 2015) and provides courts with a framework to examine, review and rate day-to-day court operations on a series of benchmarks to evaluate the extent to which court operations reflect essential elements of trauma-informed care as applied to juvenile courts. The TI-JCSA provides guidance on a series of process-oriented tasks including: (1) forming a self-assessment team, (2) conducting the self-assessment/rating element benchmarks, (3) reviewing the self-assessment element summary ratings, and (4) developing a plan for system improvement. This paper provides a comprehensive overview of the TI-JCSA. First, the broader context contributing to the initial development is provided. Second, an overview of the TI-JCSA is provided. Third, the results of a two-phase pilot involving feedback from three different juvenile courts is highlighted. Finally, implications for use of the TI-JCSA and future directions are reviewed.

Trauma and Youth Offenders

The majority of youth who encounter the juvenile justice system report extensive trauma histories (Abram et al., 2004; Dierkhising et al., 2013; Ford, Elhai, Connor, & Frueh, 2010). Traumatic event exposure can shape how youth navigate their communities given these events frequently involve experiences of victimization. Across a multi-state sample of youth receiving services, the National Center for Child Traumatic Stress found that, on average, justice-involved youth had experienced 4.9 distinct types of lifetime traumatic event exposures and, for one-third of these youth, their first traumatic event exposure occurred in the first year of life (Dierkhising et al., 2013). These findings match earlier studies suggesting that more than four of every five justice-involved youth are exposed to multiple early traumatic events (Abram et al., 2004), three-quarters experience interpersonal traumatic events reflecting significant victimization (Ford, Chapman, Mack, & Pearson, 2006), and as many as one-third suffer multiple traumatic victimizations, or polyvictimization (Ford et al., 2010). Common types of traumatic event exposures endorsed by juvenile justice-involved youth include: experiencing and witnessing family violence, experiencing and witnessing community violence, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and traumatic loss/separation (see Dierkhising et al., 2013). A unifying theme is the interpersonal nature of these events that reflects a sense of personal

violation due to physical or emotional harm caused by another individual. Such events have been shown to impede or impair brain development, making children with violent histories and untreated symptoms related to traumatic events less able to practice emotional self-regulation and demonstrate impulse control than their peers without violence histories (Listenbee et al., 2012). Ford et al. (2010) found that polyvictimization was linked to delinquent behaviors, independent of youth mental health or substance use disorders. While past traumatic event exposure is not the only factor associated with delinquency, its prevalence among the justice-involved population has led some researchers to argue these factors must be considered in any juvenile justice hearing (Ford et al., 2006). Left unaddressed, these traumatic event exposures negatively impact youth throughout their lifetimes and may lead to substance use, suicide attempts, and other traumatic stress reactions that interfere with academic performance, important relationships in the youth's life, and ultimately can place youth at risk for continued and more severe justice involvement over time (Grasso, Dierkhising, Branson, Ford, & Lee, 2016; Ko et al., 2008).

The impact of trauma event exposure is heightened when the individuals and institutions tasked with protecting justice-involved youth from further harm are compromised. Caregivers frequently exposed to traumatic events in their personal lives and communities can have challenges coping with trauma, and subsequently, with adequately protecting their children from traumatic experiences in the community. To illustrate, in a study of 152 mothers with trauma exposure, greater traumatic event exposure was linked to decreased parenting satisfaction and a history of protective service reports (Banyard, Williams, & Siegel, 2003). Particularly for marginalized communities such as ethnic minority youth or the LGBTQ community, exposure to ongoing harm may result from historical traumatic events that were legally sanctioned such as segregation laws that prompted red lining housing policies confining communities of color to violent and overcrowded neighborhoods or minimal protections against extreme bullying and harassment of children for their sexual orientation (Evans-Campbell, 2008). These experiences are further exacerbated when institutions such as child welfare agencies, schools, and law enforcement fail to acknowledge the impact of trauma and discrimination while inadvertently maintaining policies that further traumatize or discriminate against youth. Without awareness of the impact of trauma-related harm and an understanding for addressing it, individuals and systems intending to protect youth may instead implement procedures having the opposite effect.

Whether it is from the increased risk of multiple lifetime traumatic event exposures, or further traumatizing experiences within systems of care, it is clear that many youth in the juvenile justice system endorse active trauma reactions as indicated by the current diagnostic criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder. To illustrate, in a large sample of detained adolescents, Abram et al. (2004) identified a past 12-month prevalence of PTSD in 11.2% of the detained sample. This is approximately three times higher than comparable rates among community samples (see Kessler et al., 1995). Utilizing data from the NCTSN core dataset Dierkhising et al. (2013) identified an overall PTSD rate of 23.6% among youth referred for trauma treatment who also acknowledged concurrent juvenile justice system involvement. Even more important than the overall rate of PTSD,

is the much larger percentage of the sample that endorsed clinically significant trauma reactions. To illustrate, over 70% of the justice-involved sample endorsed active symptoms reflecting intrusive recollections (e.g., distressing memories, dreams, reminders of past traumatic events that are associated with both psychological and physical reactions), over 50% experienced avoidance (e.g., avoidance of either internal or external reminders of past traumatic events), and approximately 80% endorsed arousal and reactivity (e.g., irritability anger, hypervigilance, sleep disturbance). The combination of high levels of traumatic event exposures and current trauma reactions among justice-involved youth have increased the call for juvenile justice systems to adopt a trauma-informed approach. In fact, with the growing understanding about the adverse impact of trauma and increased appreciation for the juvenile justice system's role in restoring trauma-impacted youth for community reintegration, the court's role in initiating trauma-informed practices has been reinforced.

Trauma-Informed Approaches in Juvenile Courts

The concept of a trauma-informed juvenile court is not new. In 2008, Ko et al. reported that many in the juvenile justice system were embracing the trauma-informed perspective. The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) announced a trauma consultation protocol for courts in 2013 (Marsh, Dierkhising, Decker, & Rosiak, 2015). The 2012 Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence recommended that all youth entering the juvenile justice system be screened for traumatic victimization and that a trauma-informed approach be implemented wherever possible (Listenbee et al., 2012). Such an approach is consistent with the juvenile court's founding focus on rehabilitation, which has been shown to reduce recidivism and make communities safer (Griffin et al., 2012).

Judges have acknowledged that they are uniquely suited to convene the key stakeholders required to bring a trauma-informed lens to the justice system (Marsh et al., 2015; Teske, 2011). This role for judges is in keeping with the NCJFCJ's Key Principles of a Juvenile Delinquency Court of Excellence, which encourages judges to practice judicial leadership and engage across systems for effective collaboration (Deal et al., 2014; NCJFCJ, 2005). A trauma-informed approach does not require that legal professionals become trauma experts, simply that they develop some understanding of the ways traumatic events might impact youth who present before the court as well as of the community resources available when referrals are needed (Ko et al., 2008). To effectively act as a convener for trauma-informed practices requires an understanding of the essential elements that comprise a trauma-informed juvenile justice setting.

Essential Elements for Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice Settings

Moving courts toward a trauma-informed approach involves merging best practices related to trauma-informed systems with routine court procedures. To address this need for juvenile and family courts, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) partnered with professional organizations for judges and juvenile justice professionals,

such as the NCJFCJ, to conduct a roundtable identifying key components of a trauma-informed approach in juvenile justice. Beginning with the NCTSN definition of a Trauma-Informed Child and Family Service System, the group identified those aspects of the juvenile justice system that needed to be addressed when creating a system that recognizes and addresses the impact of trauma on its youth, families and staff. From the roundtable process emerged eight essential elements for a trauma-informed juvenile justice system (NCTSN, 2015).

Element 1: Trauma-informed policies and procedures: Governing any system are the policies and procedures guiding the day-to-day activities of staff and the long-term planning of leadership. Element 1 guides courts to establish standard practices recognizing the impact of trauma on youth, families, and staff and to ensure court practices and procedures are designed to respond effectively when trauma impacts individuals. Effective responses to trauma's impact aim to promote restoration from damages caused by trauma and support recovery for victims of trauma as well as the offenders who themselves have likely been previously victimized.

Element 2: Identification and screening of youth impacted by trauma: Addressing the impact of trauma on youth is contingent upon understanding their needs. Trauma screening tools provide an initial opportunity to learn about a youth's lifetime history of traumatic event exposure and current trauma symptoms that might be impacting their current emotional and behavioral functioning. One of the chief benefits of using trauma screening tools is to increase the awareness of trauma issues by non-mental health juvenile justice staff. When trauma screening tools are employed early (e.g., at system intake) it provides juvenile justice staff and youth a chance to collaboratively work toward understanding how a youth's history of trauma may impact overall rehabilitation planning. Reliable and valid trauma screening tools can complement risk/needs assessments and support maintaining safe juvenile justice settings for the youth and others.

Element 3: Clinical assessment and intervention: While the majority of youth involved with the justice system have experienced multiple traumatic event exposures, their responses to these exposures can vary widely (see Dierkhising et al., 2013). Effective trauma-informed assessments identify the impact of traumatic event exposure by noting whether a youth is experiencing current trauma reactions (e.g., symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder) and the presence of additional mental health challenges that contribute to the youth's behavior. Clinical assessments and interventions by mental health professionals can provide guidance to juvenile justice staff as to which aspects of the youth's behavior to target and which interventions are most likely to support rehabilitation.

These assessments can also guide decisions for targeted intervention and provide a fuller picture of strengths and challenges that may arise during a youth's involvement with the justice system. Distinguishing general interventions and interventions specifically designed to address the impact of trauma is an integral component of building trauma-informed juvenile justice systems. Interventions specifically targeting traumatic stress symptoms are significantly more effective than general interventions such as anger management when addressing aggression or other behaviors reflecting post-traumatic stress (Ford et al., 2006). When trauma-specific interventions are paired with trauma-informed services such as clinical and preventative interventions that help youth feel safe,

learn new skills to manage trauma reminders, and create settings that resist re-traumatizing youth, juvenile-justice settings are poised to maximize the use of trauma-specific interventions in contributing to effective rehabilitation.

Element 4: Trauma-informed programming and staffing: Comprehensively building a trauma-informed juvenile justice setting requires a knowledgeable workforce that understands why a trauma-informed approach is necessary for promoting public safety and enhancing youth rehabilitation. Trauma-informed approaches may counter previous juvenile justice behavior management paradigms employing solely punitive approaches. Training that educates leadership and all other staff in trauma-informed practices helps build a common language that facilitates improved communication and staff collaboration. Ultimately, staff who are well trained in trauma-informed practices expand their toolkit for managing youth behavior and create safer juvenile justice settings.

Element 5: Management of secondary traumatic stress: A major challenge to juvenile justice staff is their frequent exposure to secondary traumatic stress (STS; Branson, Baetz, Horowitz, Hoagwood, 2017). Listening to the traumatic stories youth share and managing their traumatic stress reactions can impact staff wellbeing and result in a number of symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress such as fatigue, mentally replaying traumatic experiences, or avoiding situations that remind staff of traumatic stories or situations. Promoting work environments that support staff wellbeing by infusing STS prevention practices can reduce staff absenteeism, improve morale, and increase staff cohesion (Branson et al., 2017; Ko et al., 2008). When leadership provides supervision and support that directly helps staff cope with the challenges and stress inherent in juvenile justice settings, those settings are safer and more efficient.

Element 6: Partnering with youth and family: Fully engaging youth in rehabilitation that promotes public safety after their release from custody or probation necessitates working with their families. Understanding the impact of traumatic events on the individual involves acknowledging the contributing context which can include community level trauma and intergenerational and historical traumas impacting the family. Community level trauma, such as living in a violent neighborhood or stressors, such as gun violence or extreme poverty, can create competing priorities for families who want to support their child's rehabilitation but are also raising the youth's siblings. For families from marginalized communities such as ethnic minority groups, generational experiences with historical traumas, such as slavery of Africans or displacement and mass murder of Native Americans, are viewed as antecedents to legally sanctioned acts of institutional discrimination. Collectively, these experiences can lead to distrust of institutions and parenting practices that may encourage youth to mirror that distrust in order to maintain their personal safety (Donisch, Bray, & Gerwartz, 2016). Justice systems that understand how various forms of trauma have disempowered families can restore their ability to support youth rehabilitation by using trauma-informed approaches.

Element 7: Trauma-informed cross system collaboration: Youth who enter the justice-system are often connected to multiple systems including school, child welfare, health-care and mental health. A coordinated approach to addressing youth trauma can occur at the individual level (e.g., information sharing agreements that provide/share results of trauma screenings/assessment across systems) and systems level (e.g., coordination of

prevention and intervention services to avoid duplications). Lessons learned from youth placement in other systems can guide behavior management in justice settings and accelerate progress toward rehabilitation. The act of providers from different systems working together towards creating positive outcomes for the youth, can also have the effect of restoring a youth's social contract, or belief that they are a part of a society whose institutions serve to protect them. Healthy youth development is associated with civic engagement (National Research Council, 2002).

Element 8: Address disparities and diversity: The justice-system is comprised of youth reflecting a number of vulnerable populations. Stigmatization of these groups can be intensified in justice settings when the roles of culture, religion, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic and other factors are not considered as contributing to youth experiences with trauma. Disproportionate representation of ethnic minority youth in the juvenile justice system, as compared to White youth, the presence of sexual minority youth who have often endured harassment and bullying, and sex-trafficked female youth highlight the need to ensure trauma-informed approaches are responsive to the heightened risk of trauma exposure for vulnerable populations (Evangelist et al., 2017). Trauma-informed approaches in the justice system are most effective when screening, assessment, and interventions are adapted to minimize bias and integrate aspects of youth culture. These practices are further enhanced when accounting for youth level of development and intellectual capacity.

Creating Trauma-Informed Courts

Efforts to practically implement trauma-informed practices in courts have involved courts partnering with trauma and mental health experts to determine how to better serve the youth in their communities. The 2008 special issue of the *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* focused on child trauma and reflected many of the promising practices that courts and justice systems had instituted in response to this increased understanding of the impact of trauma on youth. One such article offered a case study of one court's response to identifying and addressing the trauma-related needs of youth, identifying critical components of a trauma-informed court including judicial and court-staff education, trauma-assessment, and evidence-based treatment (Howard & Tener, 2008). Other articles in that issue highlighted the essential nature of cross-system collaboration (Taylor-Kletza & Siegfried, 2008) and addressing vicarious trauma/compassion fatigue (Osofsky, Putnam, & Lederman, 2008).

Over the decade following that special issue, the field's understanding of effective practices for addressing trauma within the juvenile justice setting has grown exponentially. The judicial and mental health community's understanding of the aforementioned eight elements for a trauma-informed juvenile justice system has deepened, particularly related to racial and ethnic disparities and partnerships with youth and families involved with the system. With this understanding came a wide variety of responses, and a need to support courts in assessing their environment, and policies and processes to ensure that they have adopted the most appropriate set of practices to support children and families who have been affected by trauma.

The National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) recognized the need to provide support for courts that wanted to be more trauma-informed and undertook a project with 11 courts across the country to develop a protocol for trauma consultation (Marsh, Dierkhising, Decker & Rosiak, 2015). This 'trauma audit' explores topics including: understanding of trauma, engaging parents, identification of trauma, resources, environment, and secondary traumatic stress. These consultations typically take two to three days, and the results are then compiled in a report that includes general impressions, observations, quantitative summaries of data collected, and recommendations for the court to support it in becoming more trauma-informed (Marsh, Summers, DeVault, & Villalobos, 2016).

During this same time period, trends toward creating trauma-informed child-serving systems led to the development of various tools, or checklists, for assessing whether a system was trauma-informed. However, when these tools were used in courts, some judges and court staff identified that they were not useful in a court environment and suggested developing a tool more specifically tailored to court practice, activities, and culture. Judge Michael Howard and his court staff in Stark County, Ohio, used the NCTSN-NCJFCJ *Judges Bench Cards for a Trauma-Informed Court* and the NCTSN's *Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System* to develop a first draft of a court-specific trauma organizational assessment. The initial draft evolved into a partnership between NCTSN and NCJFCJ to develop the Trauma-Informed Juvenile Court Self-Assessment (TI-JCSA; Cruise, Howard, Pickens, & Halladay-Goldman, 2019).

The TI-JCSA takes the broad aspirational language from the Essential Elements document and translates this language into practical indicators of practice and policies that reflect the themes of each element. However, the TI-JCSA is much more than a series of benchmarks to be rated. Consistent with other tools, or checklists, for assessing whether a system was trauma-informed, the TI-JCSA outlines a process for engaging in and completing the juvenile court self-assessment. As such, the TI-JCSA provides guidance on a series of important tasks including: (1) forming a self-assessment team, (2) conducting the self-assessment/rating element benchmarks, (3) reviewing the self-assessment element summary ratings, and (4) developing a plan for system improvement.

Development of TI-JCSA

A primary aim during TI-JCSA development was to convert each of the essential elements of a trauma-informed justice system into concrete behavioral benchmarks to guide courts toward measurable action. The essential elements created a foundation for comprehensively assessing a court's trauma-informed internal efforts with staff and external collaborative efforts with stakeholders of the court (see Table 1 for an overview of TI-JCSA elements and sample benchmarks). A panel of eight judicial and mental health professionals generated initial benchmarks for each element utilizing professional experience and review of relevant literature. Final benchmark items were chosen through consensus by this group of professionals. Benchmarks were refined to ensure clarity and the

TABLE 1
Overview of the TI-JCSA

<i>Element</i>	<i># of Benchmarks</i>	<i>Benchmark Example</i>
Trauma-Informed Policies and Procedures	11	Policies and practices mandate prevention of threats to physical or psychological harm to youth, families, and staff.
Identification/Screening of Youth who have been Traumatized	9	Screening results are used to inform referral decisions for a comprehensive trauma-informed assessment.
Clinical Assessment for Youth Affected by Trauma	6	Youth who are identified as potentially in need of trauma-specific or trauma-informed services by screening are referred for a follow-up trauma-specific clinical assessment.
Clinical Intervention for Youth Affected by Trauma	9	Trauma interventions delivered to youth are monitored for quality assurance and fidelity.
Trauma-informed Programming and Staff Education	6	Juvenile court staff receive training and resources on the unique adverse effects of personal, institutional, and historical trauma on vulnerable groups.
Prevention and Management of Secondary Traumatic Stress (STS)	6	Juvenile court administration has policies and procedures that consistently encourage and support appropriate recognition and response to STS.
Trauma-Informed Partnering with Youth and Families	6	Juvenile court dispositions consider the need to mitigate the adverse effects of posttraumatic stress and related behavioral health problems
Trauma-Informed Cross-System Collaboration	7	Partnerships address ways to prevent youth from entering the juvenile justice system – reducing their risk of further exposure to traumatic events and/or exacerbating posttraumatic stress reactions.
Trauma-Informed Approaches to Address Disparities and Diversity	7	Juvenile court staff ensure that language barriers and cognitive limitations do not effect access to trauma-specific and trauma-informed treatment services.

following rating scale was developed to allow courts the ability to document and categorize the level of practice:

- **Unsure or Not Known** = No knowledge of a policy, practice, or procedure
- **Under Discussion or Consideration** = Policy, practice, or procedure has been discussed or considered for development but is not currently part of routine court operations
- **Informal Practice** = Policy, practice, or procedure is not a part of formal court operations but is used on an ad hoc basis by court staff
- **Formal Practice** = Policy, practice, or procedure is a routine part of formal court operations (e.g., relevant staff are trained, supervised, and/or outcomes are monitored)
- **Not Applicable** = Element is not applicable to court operations

A secondary aim during TI-JCSA development was to design a tool that guides a self-directed and objective assessment of trauma-informed practices by courts requiring minimal to no technical assistance. The process for conducting the self-assessment involves convening a self-assessment team, collecting data, rating benchmarks, and identifying the phase of implementation for each element. Self-assessment teams consist of staff and court stakeholders identified by court leadership to conduct the self-assessment. Relevant steps for gathering data related to each element are recommended. Teams are tasked with rating each benchmark based on data gathered and using the benchmarks to reach consensus for their conclusion about each element. Instead of reaching a numerical score to represent a conclusion as to whether a court is or is not “trauma-informed” in their practices consistent with that element, the EPIS framework for identifying phases of implementation is employed (see Table 2). The EPIS framework is based in broader implementation science and offers useful guidance to describe the level of implementation achieved within a system at a given time period. The EPIS framework is one of eight implementation frameworks identified as being used in child-serving systems, and is the only one designed to be used in publicly funded child- and family- service settings (Albers et al., 2017). It suggests implementation stages that are flexible and can be applied in diverse settings. The model emphasizes the role of partnerships with youth and families as well as inter-organizational networks in the actual implementation process, which complements the content of the TI-JCSA. EPIS also uses a team-approach to implementation, bringing together stakeholders from key aspects of the organization, which is considered essential for a self-assessment and change process within a juvenile court setting. Finally, the language and stages delineated in EPIS are clear and intuitive, creating a language for the process that can be easily understood across disciplines and roles. Toward this end, the self-assessment team is guided to review individual benchmark ratings and make a collective decision as to whether the court’s practices are best categorized as in the Exploration, Preparation, Implementation, or Sustainment phases (Aarons et al., 2012).

The final aim during TI-JCSA development was to create a practical action planning process to support strategic planning around implementation of trauma-informed

TABLE 2
Description of EPIS Framework in the TI-JCSA

<i>Self-Assessment Element Ratings</i>	<i>EPIS Framework /Phase</i>
<p>Majority of the benchmarks are rated <i>Unsure/Not Known</i></p>	<p>Exploration Phase. In this phase, the juvenile court has not yet considered whether day-to-day activities under the element are trauma-informed—or that the juvenile court is just beginning to consider whether day-to-day activities under the element are trauma-informed, but has no formal plan for how this will be accomplished. Courts should consider the practices and procedures they need to target for system-level improvement. This can involve setting a goal for the key benchmarks to target for strategic planning. The Self-Assessment Team should identify barriers and challenges to changing the current practice. Guidance may be needed from external sources to develop an initial plan for system-level change. Increased knowledge about how trauma-informed practices are working in other court systems can guide initial strategic planning.</p>
<p>Majority of benchmarks are rated as <i>Under Discussion/Consideration</i> or <i>Informal Practice</i></p>	<p>Preparation Phase. In this phase, the juvenile court has practices that have involved some level of planning, where barriers and challenges to implementing the practice have already been identified and initial steps have been taken to overcome the barriers. However, there has not been a systematic protocol or consistent effort to implement the practice throughout the system.</p>
<p>Majority of benchmarks are rated as <i>Informal Practice</i></p>	<p>Preparation Phase. Also in this phase, the juvenile court has trauma-informed practices and procedures that have been operationally defined (e.g., in a working draft) and are being piloted or implemented by a small number of staff or “trauma champions” (i.e., individual staff members who have a strong background, training, and/or commitment to providing trauma-informed care). In order to formally implement the practices or procedures agency- or program-wide, steps of the Preparation Phase likely need to be completed before moving to the next phase.</p>

TABLE 2

Continued

<i>Self-Assessment Element Ratings</i>	<i>EPIS Framework /Phase</i>
Majority of the benchmarks are rated as a <i>Formal Practice</i>	<p>Implementation Phase. The juvenile court has formally adopted practices that are supported by policy. There is general knowledge of the “trauma-informed” nature of the practice as evidenced by staff member’s training and working knowledge of the policy or practice.</p> <p>Sustainment Phase. The juvenile court has practices and procedures that have been implemented system wide. The practice is considered ingrained and stable throughout the system (i.e., workplace culture characterized as trauma-informed). Practices in the Sustainment phase are those that are regularly monitored through quality assurance processes and there is a commitment by the court system to maintain the practice (e.g., practice is consistent with the mission statement, training is routine and applicable to all staff, funding is secure).</p>

best practices. Identifying each element’s overall phase of implementation, via the EPIS framework, provides the foundation or starting point for effectively using self-assessment findings to engage in strategic planning. In general, strategic planning involves discussing and documenting goals (e.g., what system-level improvement do we want to achieve), objectives (e.g., how will we go about achieving the goal), responsible parties (e.g., who within the system is best positioned to be responsible for coordinating the implementation and improvement effort), and time frame (e.g., how long will it take to devise a strategy, implement that strategy, and formalize the practice). The use of the EPIS framework reinforces that courts may be at very different levels of trauma-informed practice implementation. As such, overall strategic planning is individualized to represent the current level of implementation as evaluated by the self-assessment team. Having provided the broader context that supported the development of the TI-JCSA, and a comprehensive overview of the actual tool, highlights from a two-phase TI-JCSA pilot will be presented that (1) identifies common successes and challenges conducting the self-assessment utilizing the TI-JCSA and (2) discusses implications for future use of the TI-JCSA by courts to evaluate their practices and procedures.

Pilot of TI-JCSA

The TI-JCSA pilot was conducted in two phases. The first phase involved a comprehensive review by Stark County Family Court and recommended revision of

the self-assessment tool based on their completion of the initial draft of the TI-JCSA. The second phase involved juvenile courts recruited via the National Council for Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) network by inviting courts to participate in phase two of the pilot following presentations by the TI-JCSA development team at a NCJFCJ national conference. Two of the three courts invited to participate completed the phase two pilot. The purpose of each pilot phase was to receive feedback from courts about the design of the TI-JCSA, the utility of the TI-JCSA, and assess the degree to which courts could comfortably use the TI-JCSA with minimal technical assistance. Feedback from the pilot was used to further refine the TI-JCSA and prepare for nationwide launch.

The first phase of the pilot was completed during a twelve-month period between January 2017 and December 2017. The second phase of the pilot was completed during a seven-month period between May 2018 and December 2018. Each of the courts engaged in 2-3 phone consultations with the TI-JCSA development team during the pilot time period. Consultation calls were an hour in duration and primarily designed to assess the design of the TI-JCSA (e.g., were the instructions and content clear enough for the court to independently complete the self-assessment). Courts provided feedback on aspects of the self-assessment that were unclear or required outside technical assistance. In order to assess the degree to which the self-assessment process could be completed independently, minimal guidance was provided by TI-JCSA development team during the pilot study. The following reviews phase one and two of the pilot.

Phase 1 Pilot

Stark County Family Court is located in Stark County, Ohio and manages its own probation department and court processes (intake, diversion, and pretrial release). Detention and residential treatment are managed by the Multi-County Juvenile Attention System, a consortium of five counties. In 2017 Stark County Family Court processed 10,281 cases, 2989 were divorces and 7292 were juvenile cases.

When forming the self-assessment team to complete the initial TI-JCSA, Stark County felt it was imperative that the judge lead the team and that the court administrator be the vice chair. This sent a strong message to staff that the judicial leadership of the court was committed to the effort and to the end result of being more trauma-informed and trauma responsive. The team was representative of the various functional departments of the court: intake and diversion, pretrial services, probation, and licensed mental health staff members. This ensured all staff were speaking the same language, allowed data input from each department, and provided feedback to the leaders of all departments about contemplated changes. Obstacles to completing self-assessment included self-assessment team members managing their other duties, staff turnover, promotions, and reassignments.

All elements for the TI-JCSA were completed. Conclusions for each element based on the EPIS framework were arrived at after group discussion that led to consensus. There was a particular emphasis on Element 2 screening, Element 3 assessment and referral, Element 4 staff training, and Element 7 cross system collaboration. The TI-JCSA prompted Stark County to think about Element 2, the screening process and address the

issue of the child having to disclose information about trauma histories repeatedly and possible strategies to minimize this from a system perspective. As a result of the self-assessment Stark County integrated a system-wide approach to screening that provides nearly universal screening opportunities for youth.

In addressing Element 3, assessment and referral, Stark County, over several months, scheduled appointments with all of the mental health agencies to whom children are referred. This was extremely beneficial for opening and clarifying lines of communication, discussing what those agencies needed from court staff as part of the referral and what kind of feedback the court was expecting from them. Forms and protocols such as “release of information” were agreed upon. Stark County clarified that they were not seeking privileged information about the treatment itself, but rather inquiring whether the child was attending his or her sessions, was he or she cooperating, and were there any recommendations for court personnel. Usually those recommendations have involved trauma reminders and how to avoid triggering the child.

Overall, Stark County believed the TI-JCSA provided guidance on both strengths and areas of improvement for their court. They believed they were doing well on Element 3, staff training, until they considered their personnel turnover rates and the number of new hires. Completion of the TI-JCSA convinced Stark County to include one hour of basic trauma education as part of new staff orientation. Stark County Family Court considers the TI-JCSA as the foundation for ongoing efforts to become more trauma-informed and trauma responsive. Stark County continues to review it regularly to plan for and measure improvement.

Phase 2 Pilot

Court 1: Troup County Juvenile Court oversees a juvenile-justice population of approximately 119 in Georgia. Troup County’s Juvenile Court is responsible for managing several aspects of the juvenile justice experience including probation, detention, and diversion. According to data provided by the court reflecting 2018 court service utilization, 25 youth were participating through diversion, 66 through probation, and 28 through detention services with the majority of youth from probation and detention services identifying as Black (80%) and male (95%). During the self-assessment preparation phase, the court’s expressed aim was to fill gaps in policy and procedure related to trauma-informed practice.

To plan for completion of the TI-JCSA, court staff referenced lessons learned from a non-trauma related court self-assessment completed in the prior year. The team from the previous self-assessment process was reconstituted and primarily included staff internal to the court system. Staff noted that forming a self-assessment team with an overabundance of external stakeholders at the outset would significantly delay conducting the self-assessment. During the self-assessment team formation stage, Troup County acknowledged that it would be relatively easy to engage external stakeholders after the initial self-assessment was conducted. The initial self-assessment team was finalized during the first month of the pilot and consisted of 9 staff who included the judge, court administrator, assistant court administrator, community resource coordinator, two senior

probation staff, court clerk, and prosecutor. During the preparation phase, the self-assessment team outlined a timeline for completion of TI-JCSA Elements 1 through 5 by December 2018.

Data gathering was initiated during the second month of the pilot. For each element, the self-assessment team started with a planning meeting to identify data sources. They collected data on the selected benchmarks from multiple data sources and individually reviewed the data and scored the benchmarks. The self-assessment team reconvened to discuss and arrive at consensus on the benchmarks and the phase of implementation for each element according to the EPIS framework. Data sources consisted of policy review, observation of practices, review of protocols related to the element, and interviews with select staff. The self-assessment team reached consensus by highlighting dissenting perspectives and working toward a decision based on data most accurately reflecting the generally agreed upon state of the element in the court (e.g., consensus ratings). Discussions to reach consensus often were hours in duration and final decisions for benchmarks were decided by majority vote. Following identification of the element's phase of implementation, the self-assessment team completed the strategic planning worksheet during the element review meeting. To gain momentum, the team reported prioritizing "low hanging fruit" as next steps for implementation within each TI-JCSA element.

Troup County expressed overall satisfaction with the self-assessment tool and process while noting some challenges. Their team reported feeling confident in completing the self-assessment independently as a court generally due to completing a similar self-assessment process in the past year and overall familiarity with trauma-informed practices. The self-assessment team was encouraged that the TI-JCSA helped highlight what prior system reform efforts have been successful, as well as demonstrating the need for continued growth—particularly as it relates to ensuring policies match practices. The process also highlighted groups of staff within the court where buy-in for trauma-informed practices are present and other groups that need further support to shift perspectives toward a trauma-informed lens. While the strategic planning helped identify next steps, it was limited in its ability to specifically guide next steps. For example, the court expressed a need for further technical assistance in choosing and integrating trauma-informed screening tools into court practices. Troup County staff reported consulting with NCJFCJ trauma experts about specific screening tools following completion of TI-JCSA Element 2. Troup County provided the TI-JCSA development team with minor recommendations for rewording some of the benchmarks.

Court 2: Lucas County Juvenile Court is located in Ohio and manages several components of the county's juvenile-justice system including probation, detention, a youth treatment center, and the court process (i.e., notice of hearing, court date, hearing). Their court processed over 12,000 cases in 2017 reflecting delinquency, traffic violations, dependency, neglect and abuse. Initial preparation for the TI-JCSA was coordinated by the court administrator, assistant court administrator and training coordinator. Given urgent court priorities unrelated to TI-JCSA at the outset of the pilot, the preparation team planned completion of TI-JCSA during a two-month window at the end of the

pilot period. Preparation included identifying potential self-assessment team members, sources of data, developing a plan for expedited completion of TI-JCSA, and designing an orientation to prepare the self-assessment team for data collection. Despite competing priorities, the preparation team stated that implementing trauma-informed practices were a priority for their court and expressed a desire to use the TI-JCSA to assess how effective their implementation practices have been to date. The preparation team identified 19 court staff and community members to assign to the self-assessment team. These members included the residential facility director and therapist, probation administrator, court psychologist, misdemeanor services manager, family violence prevention director, assessment center director, CASA director, juvenile detention administrator and shift supervisor, mediation director, family drug court manager, and a number of community partners including sheriff department sergeant and deputy, mental health therapist, community clinic director, associate professor of local university, board member from local clinic, multi-systemic therapy coordinator, and public defender. During orientation the preparation team presented a self-designed PowerPoint presentation overviewing the court's philosophy about trauma-informed practices and outlining the process for completing the TI-JCSA.

The team completed a self-assessment for the overall court, as well as each of the four major subsystems: probation, detention, youth treatment center, and court process. In total, five self-assessments were completed. More specifically, the self-assessment team completed TI-JCSA Elements 1-8 for each of the four major subsystems and an additional TI-JCSA for the overall operations of the court system. To efficiently conduct the self-assessment, team members were paired in subgroups of 2 to 4 individuals consisting of, at minimum, one internal staff member and a community partner. Subgroups were assigned one element to be completed for each of the four major subsystems and one for the overall court system. The preparation team provided subgroups with baseline data for respective elements such as number of youth referred for services from screening procedures within various departments. The preparation team provided directions for procuring additional data needed to make element benchmark ratings. The preparation team estimated 20 to 24 hours of time spent by subgroups reviewing documents, interviewing staff and stakeholders related to assigned elements, and meeting as a subgroup to prepare a presentation on their element to the larger self-assessment team. Team members were given six weeks to collect data and reach consensus among the subgroup for the benchmarks.

A review meeting was convened to present element findings, discuss diverging perspectives, recommend element ratings, and begin action planning using strategic planning documents. Each subgroup presented element findings and provided self-assessment benchmark rating recommendations. The preparation team noted that, while it was important leadership was aware of the self-assessment process, it was critical that subgroups had the independence to complete the process without fear that the findings would lead to a negative reaction from leadership. Based on this rationale, the preparation team was responsible for final element ratings and communicating TI-JCSA findings to leadership. To achieve this outcome, the preparation team used the findings and recommendations compiled by the self-assessment team to reach a consensus on element

ratings among the preparation team. The preparation team plans to bring leadership to the table in the upcoming months to hear recommendations about next steps for strategic planning.

The Lucas County team had recommendations for improving the clarity of the tool. One challenge during the process was establishing a common understanding of newer terms. For instance, they noted that self-assessment team members had a variety of definitions for secondary traumatic stress. The variety of definitions made it challenging to reach consensus as a sub-group. A primary recommendation was to include a glossary to help standardize the understanding of trauma-related terms. Additionally, they felt that the rating option for benchmarks (noted earlier) “unsure/not known” was not broad enough to fit certain situations, and they suggested including the option that reflected “no this practice is not occurring”. They also made suggestions for changes in wording to several items.

Overall the team reported that they found the TI-JCSA a useful tool for analyzing the levels of trauma awareness and responsiveness in their expansive court system. Broadly, the team noted the TI-JCSA helped identify cross-system collaborative processes and supported planning for improved communication among child-serving systems. They noted that such collaboration, while challenging, is critical for helping youth and families that come into the system. They suggested addressing this in greater detail in the TI-JCSA recommendations for strategic planning.

DISCUSSION

Grounded in the eight *Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System*, the TI-JCSA provides juvenile courts with a framework to examine, review, and rate day-to-day court operations on a set of benchmarks that reflect the extent to which court practices are trauma-informed. The TI-JCSA outlines a process for engaging in and completing the court self-assessment, providing guidance on forming a self-assessment team, gathering the necessary data to rate TI-JCSA benchmarks (e.g., individual and summary ratings), and engaging in strategic planning. The pilot provided valuable information on the overall design and utility of the TI-JCSA. This section addresses major findings from the pilot that have guided further revision of the TI-JCSA to inform its use by juvenile courts. Presented in the form of lessons learned, this section reviews major conclusions from the pilot regarding both the design and utility of the TI-JCSA. Implications for future use of the TI-JCSA are also discussed.

Design of TI-JCSA

Courts participating in the pilot provided valuable information about the overall design of the TI-JCSA. In particular, Stark County Family Court provided extremely valuable information on an initial version of the TI-JCSA. This court conducted a deep-dive review of the language (e.g., terminology, benchmark descriptions) used throughout the TI-JCSA suggesting numerous points where terminology needed to be

refined to ensure adequate comprehension and understanding by court staff. By providing this line level review, Stark County Family Court aided the development team in reviewing the entire TI-JCSA document and clarifying language that was either vague or not applicable to juvenile courts. This subsequent revision was then provided to juvenile courts during Phase 2 of the pilot. Feedback received from Troup County Juvenile Court and Lucas County Juvenile Court led to additional changes in the design of the TI-JCSA. Overall, it was clear from their feedback, that adequate instruction was provided regarding the overall steps to complete the self-assessment, including the rating criteria for element benchmarks, and the use of the EPIS framework to guide summary element ratings. Lucas County Juvenile Court encouraged the developers to add a glossary of trauma-related terms. The development team agreed that this recommendation would not only help ensure consistency among self-assessment team members, but also provide common definitions that would assist in a team's communication to other community partners and stakeholders within and outside of the court. A glossary of key terms and definitions is currently being added to the TI-JCSA. Troup County Juvenile Court also provided some specific feedback on the design of the strategic planning section of the TI-JCSA, noting that the content and accompanying strategic planning documents did not support content level assistance in strategic planning. While each TI-JCSA element does provide links to a variety of content-based resources that could be consulted for strategic planning, the feedback from this court informed some revisions to the general information provided about the strategic planning section. The developers clarified that the strategic planning section does not necessarily support a court's determining *what* needs to change (e.g., what trauma screening tool should be selected and used within the court's programs) but helps clarify *how* (e.g., the steps that are necessary to address trauma screening tool selection) the court can articulate a planning process to achieve positive movement toward more trauma-informed practices.

Utility of TI-JCSA

An overarching conclusion from the three courts' participation in the pilot is that each court found that the TI-JCSA provided adequate guidance to form a self-assessment team, conduct the self-assessment, and use the TI-JCSA to engage in strategic planning activities. Feedback generated from each court during the pilot supported three broad conclusions regarding the overall utility of the TI-JCSA.

Flexibility in Forming the Self-Assessment Team: The TI-JCSA allows for flexibility in forming the self-assessment team, and courts responded that this helped support an effective self-assessment process. As noted in the court review section, each court took a different approach in forming their self-assessment team that fit their overall goal for the self-assessment process. For example, Stark County Juvenile Court had an experienced juvenile court judge, with a deep knowledge of trauma-informed practices, that served as a natural fit to lead the self-assessment process. Based on prior experience with trauma-informed reforms, and/or prior self-assessment processes, both Stark and Troup counties developed self-assessment teams comprised of internal court staff with expertise tied to

specific TI-JCSA Elements. Recognizing the size of the court, and the goal of utilizing the TI-JCSA to review different court systems (e.g., probation, detention), Lucas County formed a preparation team that essentially served as an executive committee guiding the work of smaller self-assessment teams tasked with specific element reviews (e.g., reviewing Element 1 in probation, detention, youth treatment, and overall court practices). Lucas County included a community partner on each of the smaller teams from the outset while Stark County strategically engaged community partners for specific element reviews. The flexibility built into the suggested design of the self-assessment team allowed each court to make strategic decisions on the team's composition and expertise that matched both the breadth of the review as well as the necessary depth needed to comprehensively conduct reviews of each element. Each court viewed this flexibility as an important component to assist teams in completing the TI-JCSA consistent with their goals.

Benchmark and Summary Element Ratings Promote Within-System and Cross-System Communication and Collaboration: A clear lesson learned across all three courts' use of the TI-JCSA is that the structure and design provided a process that supported engaging community partners and a language that promoted better communication on key trauma-informed concepts and processes. By sharing Element rating forms and engaging community partners as team members or element rating informants, the self-assessment teams all noted increased cross-system collaboration and communication. To illustrate, Stark County Juvenile court met with key staff from mental health agencies in their review of Element 3 benchmarks. By sharing the benchmarks, members of the self-assessment team opened important lines of communication that allowed for clarification of both court and agency procedures. Representing within-system communication, Troup County's self-assessment process identified key court staff constituencies that had strong buy-in for trauma-informed practices and other court personnel where further communication was needed to shift perspectives toward a more trauma-informed approach. Lucas County built an orientation to the TI-JCSA to promote consistency and engagement of all team members (internal and external) in the overall self-assessment task. A clear finding from Lucas County was that this pre-data collection activity enhanced the focus and buy-in of all partners and assisted the overall team in both debating and reaching consensus on Element ratings that then informed Summary ratings that were ultimately communicated to court leadership. While there were some challenges in the smaller assessment teams using different definitions of some key terminology, Lucas County reported that the structure of the TI-JCSA helped identify key cross-system collaborative processes and ways to enhance communication within and across their system.

Utility of the EPIS Framework to Evaluate Prior Reform Efforts and Plan for Future Reform Efforts: Each court participating in the pilot had varying levels of exposure and experience in implementing trauma-informed practices within their courts. A clear finding from the pilot was that the use of the EPIS framework in providing Summary Element ratings was a way to benchmark the success of prior reform efforts and/or prioritize areas for future strategic planning and reform. To illustrate the overall summary rating of Element 2 as "Implementation" by Stark County Family Court led to the team

transitioning their existing practice of referring youth for trauma screening at the discretion of hearing officers and probation officers to a process of systematic screening of youth at the point of intake—a process that is more closely aligned with screening benchmarks. Over time this has led to an increase in the quality and quantity of screenings, better feedback to youth and parents, and more collaboration with treatment providers. Troup County used the summary element ratings to benchmark the success of prior system reform efforts. This led to a specific strategic planning focus on ensuring that policies are developed that match the practices established through prior reforms (i.e., developing strategic plans to promote moving Summary Element ratings from Preparation to Implementation Phase). While Lucas County Juvenile Court did not have specific strategic planning initiatives established at the end of their pilot, the preparation team noted that Summary Element ratings allowed for a single benchmark to evaluate the extent to which each court system (e.g., detention and probation) had comparable or disparate levels of trauma-informed practices. By being able to communicate the EPIS ratings, by element, and across their court subsystems, the preparation team plans to develop focused strategic planning activities that target disparate ratings and use this system to effectively communicate their priorities and strategies to leadership.

Implications for Future Use of the TI-JCSA

Lessons learned from the pilot support that the TI-JCSA provides juvenile courts with a framework to examine, review, and rate day-to-day court operations on a set of benchmarks that reflect the extent to which court policies, practices, and procedures are trauma-informed. Feedback regarding the design and utility of the TI-JCSA corroborated that the courts are able to develop a self-assessment team, conduct element reviews, reach consensus on summary element ratings, and prioritize strategic planning activities with minimal external guidance or technical assistance. Results of the pilot support that the TI-JCSA provides both a framework and common language by which court staff can communicate to key personnel within the court system and engage stakeholders and community partners. An overarching benefit of the TI-JCSA appears to be that simply by engaging in the self-assessment process, courts are able to articulate and support their commitment to enhancing trauma-informed practices and bring key cross-system partners into conversation and strategic planning. The flexible use of the TI-JCSA (e.g., strategic formation of the self-assessment team, focusing on critical Elements to evaluate prior reform efforts or to support future reforms through strategic planning, conducting comprehensive reviews of each court subsystem) allows juvenile courts to design an overall self-assessment process that is consistent with their goals and priorities in enhancing trauma-informed practices.

Pilot courts universally recognized that the TI-JCSA facilitates robust strategic planning for trauma-informed practices while also contributing to overall operational improvements. Pilot courts reported being at different stages of trauma-informed practice implementation, but each noted the TI-JCSA process required engaging in quality improvement activities that will enhance their overall operational capabilities. Specifically, completing TI-JCSA critical components provide opportunities to evaluate

improvements in trauma-informed practice over time and inform ongoing operational adjustments that have implications for staff, youth, and families.

The first TI-JCSA critical component involves choosing a self-assessment team—as this is critical for collecting the breadth of information required by the TI-JCSA process. Self-assessment team formation also provides courts an opportunity to gain buy-in from stakeholders internal and external to the court. Pilot sites noted varying levels of buy-in for trauma-informed practice implementation but were able to use the process of forming self-assessment teams to pinpoint where the most resistance and alignment with trauma-informed approaches existed within their courts and external stakeholders. This information can guide judges and court administrators to use targeted trauma-informed capacity building efforts that enlists champions for trauma-informed practices and directly addresses stakeholder concerns.

The second critical component involves general policy and practice review using the TI-JCSA benchmarks. Pilot sites noted that reviewing their general policies and practices with focused attention on integrating trauma-informed approaches provided opportunities to identify outdated policies and ensure current practices aligned with the court's overall strategic mission. The TI-JCSA prompts courts to engage in periodic reviews of their operational policies and practices that have tremendous implications for more effective resource allocation, improved internal communication among staff and leadership, and more efficient adjustments given periodic reviews with focused attention to trauma-informed practices that are preventative and potentially avoids patterns of solely responding to crises.

The final critical component involves using the TI-JCSA as a living document that permits periodic assessment of strategic planning effectiveness through the use of the EPIS framework. Initial completion of the TI-JCSA provides an informal baseline for each of the aforementioned critical components, but the purpose of the tool is to provide a formal evaluation of adherence to each of the Essential Elements. In essence, this formal evaluation prompts courts to assess how close they are to the EPIS framework Sustainment phase for each Essential Element. Completing the TI-JCSA periodically provides a mechanism for courts to evaluate whether changes generated from their strategic planning process effectively moved their court toward a more advanced stage of implementation. For instance, courts may initially complete the TI-JCSA and identify Element 2 (identifying and screening for trauma) at the Exploration stage and strategically plan to research tools to pilot during the intake process. The court can conduct the TI-JCSA process again a year later and assess whether the strategic plan identified during the first self-assessment advanced their court toward the Preparation, Implementation, or Sustainment phase for Element 2 (e.g., providing clinical assessments for youth screened as positive during the intake process).

Engaging the critical components of the TI-JCSA on an ongoing basis has significant implications for how courts navigate toward trauma-informed policies and practices. This approach allows courts to use an evidence-based implementation practice (the EPIS framework) to compare their progress with themselves versus other courts. The TI-JCSA was purposefully designed to prompt courts to identify their stage of implementation versus calculate a score that lends itself to comparison with other courts or suggest the

aim is to achieve a particular score. Adopting trauma-informed practice is an ongoing process that requires responsiveness to the changing needs of all stakeholders, the TI-JCSA's flexibility of use (e.g., who is part of a self-assessment team, the order for assessing elements etc.) paired with clear guidance on how to structure the process of assessment have the potential to provide courts with an effective tool for autonomously evaluating trauma-informed practices and enhancing courts' ability to review and adjust general operational procedures and policies.

Future dissemination and use of the TI-JCSA to strategically plan and implement best trauma-informed practice can further advance juvenile courts toward a standard of trauma-informed policies and practices. This can include examples of actual written policies related to specific TI-JCSA benchmarks or elements that could be widely disseminated across juvenile courts. Completing the TI-JCSA can also support juvenile courts establishing partnerships with professional organizations like NCJFCJ or local NCTSN sites for focused technical assistance and support. Juvenile courts may be able to share key TI-JCSA findings that will then allow other professional organizations to better understand the needs of the local court and prioritize ways in which collaborative technical assistance can be focused and streamlined to more efficiently meet the needs of the local court. Finally, the TI-JCSA will provide a framework that courts can use in repeat assessments to assess whether strategic processes yield practices and procedural changes in courts that benefit youth, families, and court staff and more fully align practices within a trauma-informed framework. Such repeated assessments will not only demonstrate the commitment to adopting a trauma-informed approach but allow juvenile courts to track and communicate their progress using a clear, coherent, and comprehensive rating process.

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