



## TAG in Action: Trauma-Informed School Learning Collaborative

As part of its national call to action, **Adolescent Health: Think, Act, Grow**® (TAG), the Office of Adolescent Health in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has identified a number of successful strategies for improving adolescent health throughout the country.

### *The Goal*

The New Orleans Trauma-Informed School Learning Collaborative provides support to schools as they transform their climate to become trauma sensitive and build their capacity to implement, sustain, and improve the delivery of trauma-focused services.

### *The Game Plan*

The Trauma-Informed School Learning Collaborative (TISLC) was created to address the high rates of acute and chronic trauma experienced by youth throughout New Orleans. The collaborative brought together a diverse group of partners from social work, psychology, education, public health, mental health, and research. The partners committed to move beyond training individuals; rather, they intend to build the capacity of organizations to effectively address trauma in their daily practices.

Five New Orleans schools, including three primary schools and three high schools, partnered with TISLC. Utilizing the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) framework for addressing trauma, the schools are reshaping their policies, procedures, and practices to: a) realize the prevalence and impact of trauma; b) recognize the signs of trauma and the need for learning supports for traumatized students; and c) respond to avoid re-traumatization by integrating principles of trauma-informed care into the classroom and responding to their own self-care needs. For example, one school’s zero-tolerance suspension-expulsion requirements were eliminated and replaced with more flexible procedures that address the root of a youth’s misbehavior. Students also got involved and learned how to support each other and be good friends by asking questions and listening when others seem sad or angry. Importantly, the schools collect both process and outcome data related to their implementation and engage in ongoing data-based decision-making.

### *The Winning Plays*

TISLC’s work – in the schools and among the collaborative partners – is based upon SAMHSA’s six principles of trauma-informed schools: safety; trustworthiness and transparency; peer support; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment voice and choice; and cultural humility. Courtney Baker, Assistant Professor of Psychology at Tulane University, explained, “We’re not implementing a program. It’s a framework that is based on evidence. School leaders use the framework and then do what makes sense for their community. What’s exciting is that each school has taken a very different approach, yet they are all moving towards same goal. The flexibility and adaptability is so important because, just like each young person is unique, each of our schools is really unique.”

### *Learn More*

New Orleans Trauma-Informed Schools Learning Collaborative  
<http://www.nolaforlife.org/progress/invest-in-prevention/trauma-response-in-schools/>

