



INFORMATION SHEET 1 : Culturally Informed Trauma : Integrated Healing Approach (CITIHA) - Framework

A CITIHA is a strengths based service delivery model that is rooted in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma on culture and community that emphasises physical, psychological and emotional safety for both clients and staff.

It is an approach that:

- Understands that personal AND professional development are interrelated and integral to the successful implementation of the CITIHA Framework.
- Understands that Indigenous approaches to education places a strong emphasis on enhancing self and community learning. It is the process of becoming aware of self and others, which underpins purposeful personal development and healing as a cornerstone to education training and skill enhancement.
- Creates safe, calm and respectful physical and emotional environments.
- Provides culturally safe/fit services, which support positive social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB) principles and recognises the importance of culture and identity as strengths in recovery from trauma.
- Understands listening as a key ingredient for developing healing, hopeful, honest and trusting relationships, which are valued within the organisational culture for both clients and staff.
- Acknowledges the power of mapping and listening to stories as important in understanding the experiences that may comprise of multiple victimisations, while also documenting strengths and resiliency.
- Ensures services are culturally respectful as they promote clients' voices, preferences and perspectives as highly valued and integral to both the present and vision for the future.
- Respects men, woman and children's choices and control while minimising re-victimisation.
- Delivers trauma specific services through collaborating with non-mainstream and expanded community supports (such as faith communities, friends and families, etc.)
- Builds a workforce and leadership team with knowledge and skills to support the vision and understands the importance of *CITIHA* as integral to the mission of all services.

A CITIHA is based on the recognition that many beliefs and behaviours expressed by survivors of family violence and/or sexual assault are directly related to their traumatic experiences.

Assumptions, core values and principles

Drawing on SAMHSA's (2014) set of four assumptions, Atkinson's (2002) Educaring Healing Framework and the Larrakia Nation Holistic Model of Healing (2015), the five main assumptions in a *CITIHA* include:

Key Assumptions of a *CITIHA*

- **Realising** the widespread impact of trauma and understanding potential paths for recovery;
- **Recognising** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the organisation;
- **Responding** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices;
- **Resisting** re-traumatisation of clients and staff; and
- **Rebuilding** connection to self, community, family and kin, country, culture, body-mind and spirit-spirituality through:
 - Creating culturally safe environments;
 - Finding and telling our stories;
 - Making sense of the stories;
 - Feeling feelings;
 - Moving through layers of loss and grief to ownership and choices; and
 - Strengthening cultural and spiritual identities.

Core Values of a *CITIHA*

The core values of a *CITIHA* that will help guide your Service to address each of the main assumptions are:

- **RESPECT** for each person as a unique human being, with unlimited potential.
- **RIGHTS** to be safe, protected, allowed to grow and learn within cultural and spiritual ways of being in the world, at home, and the community.
- **RESPONSIBILITY** – Learning responsibility for life choices and behaviours.
- **RECIPROCITY** – The mutual exchange of caring and sharing.
- **RELATEDNESS** – How the person engages in the world in which they live and learn – a world of relationships.
- **RESILIENCE** – flexibility - hardiness.
- **RESONANCE** – empathy - character - moral fibre – the language of the heart.

Core Principles of a CITIHA

A CITIHA reflects adherence to eight core principles that can guide transformational change within Services:

Principles	Explanation
Understand trauma and its impact on individuals, families and communal groups	This expertise is critical to avoid misunderstandings between staff and clients that can re-traumatise individuals and cause them to disengage from a program. Two strategies promote understanding of trauma and its impacts: trauma-informed policies and training. <i>Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing</i> policies formally acknowledge that clients have experienced trauma, commit to understanding trauma and its impacts, and detail trauma-informed care practices. Ongoing trauma-related workforce training and support is also essential. For example, staff members need to learn about how family violence and sexual assault can be both a symptom of and cause of trauma and how trauma impacts child development and attachment to caregivers. Appropriate support activities might include regular supervision, team meetings and staff self-care opportunities.
Promote safety	Individuals and families who have experienced trauma require spaces in which they feel physically and emotionally safe. Men, Women and Children need to advise what measures make them feel safe. Their identified measures need to be consistently, predictably and respectfully provided. Service providers have reported that creating a safe physical space for children includes having child-friendly areas and engaging play materials. Creating a safe emotional environment involves making men, women and children feel welcome (e.g. through tours and staff introductions), providing full information about service processes (in their preferred language) and being responsive and respectful of their needs.
Ensure cultural competency	Culture plays an important role in how victims/survivors of trauma manage and express their traumatic life experience/s and identify the supports and interventions that are most effective. Culturally competent services are respectful of, and specific to, cultural backgrounds. Such services may offer opportunities for clients to engage in cultural rituals, speak in their first language and offer specific foods. Culturally competent staff are aware of their own cultural attitudes and beliefs, as well as those of the individuals, families and communities they support. They are alert to the legitimacy of inter-cultural difference and able to interact effectively with different cultural groups.
Support client control	Client control consists of two important aspects. First, victims/survivors of trauma are supported to regain a sense of control over their daily lives and build competencies that will strengthen their sense of autonomy. Second, service systems are set up to keep individuals (and their caregivers) well informed about all aspects of their treatment, with the individual having ample opportunities to make daily decisions and actively participate in the healing process.
Share power and governance	Power and decision making is shared across all levels of the organisation, whether related to day-to-day decisions or the review and creation of policies and procedures. Practical means of sharing power and governance include recruiting clients to the board and involving them in the design and evaluation of programs and practices.
Integrate care	Integrating care involves bringing together all the services and supports needed to assist individuals, families and communities to enhance their physical, emotional, social, cultural and spiritual wellbeing. Documented practice experience suggests that approaches informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture and western health and healing practice, including neuroscience, show promise for supporting healing and recovery. There is also evidence that support of an ecological approach, which considers and acts on all systems that are negatively effecting an individual and community situation, are more effective than a separation of services.
Support relationship building	Support relationship building as a means of promoting healing and recovery from trauma both for clients as individuals or in groups and within workforce teams. Safe, authentic and positive relationships assist healing and recovery. <i>Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing</i> services facilitate relationship building and relationship healing. They empower individuals, families and communities to take control of their own healing and recovery. Such services adopt a strengths-based approach, focusing on the capabilities that individuals, families or communities bring to a problem or issue. Deep listening and the power of story are two key ingredients for facilitating authentic relationships. Facilitating peer-to-peer support across the workplace, families and social groups is important.
Enable recovery	<i>Culturally Informed Trauma Integrated Healing</i> services empower individuals, families and communities to take control of their own healing and recovery. They adopt a strengths-based approach, which focuses on the capabilities that individuals bring to a problem or issue and assert that healing or recovery is always possible.

Source: Atkinson (2013) adapted from Guarino et al., 2009.