

# Understanding Trauma-Informed Care: Best Practices for Volunteers



## Empathy. Compassion. Support.

In your vital role as a volunteer, you have the power to make a significant difference in the lives of those you serve. By understanding trauma and practicing Trauma-Informed Care (TIC), you can provide not just food, but also safety, dignity, and healing. Here are some essential guidelines to ensure your support is sensitive, empathetic, and effective.

## What is Trauma?

Trauma is an emotional response to a distressing event. It affects people's ability to trust, feel safe, and connect with others. Many of those seeking food assistance may have experienced trauma.

## Trauma-Informed Approaches

**Safety:** Ensure to make the environment welcoming, safe, and free from judgment.

**Trustworthiness:** Be consistent, reliable, and transparent. Respect privacy and confidentiality.

**Choice:** Empower by offering choices, respecting cultural preferences and dietary needs.

**Mindful Communication:** Be mindful of your tone, body language, and the words you use.

## Communication Skills

- **Active Listening:** Show genuine interest and empathy.
- **Trauma-Sensitive Language:** Use non-judgmental, supportive language. Avoid assumptions and intrusive questions.
- **Crisis De-escalation:** Stay calm, composed, and empathetic. Offer reassurance and practical help.

## SELF-CARE FOR VOLUNTEERS

- **Acknowledge your emotions:** It's normal to feel affected.
- **Supervision & Support:** Talk to your supervisor or attend debriefing sessions.
- **Take Care of Yourself:** Practice self-compassion. Engage in activities that bring you joy. Seek help if needed.

Your empathy and understanding create a safe space for healing. Thank you for your dedication. Together, we build a stronger, more compassionate community.