

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS IMPACTED BY TRAUMA**  
PARTNERSHIP HELPS SOCIAL SERVICES ADOPT TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE MODEL

More than eighty-five per cent of people served by Niagara's social service agencies have been adversely affected by trauma – according to a new survey that's part of an initiative to help agencies cope with the trauma faced by the people they serve and their own staff through Trauma-Informed Care.

Led by Armstrong Strategy Group and PenFinancial Credit Union in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association Niagara, this new initiative seeks to help Niagara's social service providers develop trauma-informed models of care. The newly-released survey by the University at Buffalo's Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC) illustrates the impact trauma has on these Niagara sectors: Not only have the vast majority of clients faced trauma, it's also an issue for agency staff, who often experience trauma vicariously through their clients.

"We've undertaken this initiative to better understand the magnitude of the impact of trauma on community agencies – their staff and the people they serve," says John Armstrong, President of Armstrong Strategy Group and lead organizer of the trauma initiative. "The better we understand trauma and its impact, the better able community agencies will be at effectively dealing with that impact."

PenFinancial Credit Union is funding up to 15 community agencies to become trauma-informed through a program called "Trauma-Informed Care Champion Learning Collaborative" delivered by ITTIC. A trauma-informed model of care is a way an organization, system or person realizes the prevalence of trauma, recognizes how it affects everyone, and how they respond by putting it into practice. The agencies surveyed reported being only moderately trauma-informed.

The survey's findings are being shared with agencies, funders and the public both to raise awareness about the human toll of trauma and inform the need for trauma-informed training and models of care.

"Financial hardship and stress is a major form of adversity and something many people experience long-term," said Ken Janzen, CEO of PenFinancial Credit Union. "We're underwriting the cost for 15 community agencies to join the Learning Collaborative because we believe that helping community agencies better understand their clients and how to more effectively deliver services to them will produce better outcomes and provide important support to the dedicated staff serving those clients."

CMHA Niagara used the University of Buffalo ITTIC model to develop its framework. Ian Masse, Registered Social Worker and Program Manager at CMHA Niagara, said by becoming a trauma-informed agency CMHA Niagara has the "universal lens for understanding the human

behind the illness, the symptom, and how they present, while at the same time supporting our staff and clients consistently regardless of what services we were offering or issues the client is presenting with.”

Overall, the 24 agencies surveyed, representing up to 2,000 employees and tens of thousands of clients, believed that becoming more trauma-informed would make them more effective and better able to both engage clients and keep staff. But few reported having the budget for trauma and trauma-informed care training.

Lead researcher, Travis Hales, identified key takeaways from the survey:

- Twenty-four diverse agencies established a baseline needs assessment for the Niagara region
- Participating agencies reported that their service users are heavily impacted by adversity and trauma
- While the agencies are aware of trauma-informed approaches, there remains a critical need for staff training and implementation support

More than any other factor, funding was cited as a barrier to trauma-informed care. Fully half of responses cited funding for training as a major need to support the transition.

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For questions about the learning collaborative or application process for Niagara's health and social service agencies, please contact Samantha Koury at [spkoury@buffalo.edu](mailto:spkoury@buffalo.edu)

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