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Trauma-Informed Survey Toolkit – Checklist

This checklist is for researchers and practitioners designing, administering, and analyzing a trauma-informed survey with newcomers. It should serve as a starting point framework rather than a comprehensive list. The checklist is meant to be customized to include any additional items as necessary. As you go through your research design process, consider six guiding principles: **safety; trust; peer support; collaboration; empowerment and choice; and cultural and historical issues** (CDC, 2018).

PHASE	ACTIVITY	STANDARD PRACTICE	TRAUMA-INFORMED SURVEY CHECKLIST	ASK
DESIGN	Define the purpose and ethical foundations of the survey.	• Identify the purpose and objectives of the survey. • Practice beneficence. • Ensure that participants are respected. • Ensure participants' privacy is protected throughout their participation.	☐ Identify how the research or evaluation will benefit the participants. ☐ Examine existing community-based resources. ☐ Examine challenges or risks within the community or population served. ☐ Provide a transparent description of the research. ☐ Ensure consent procedures and informed consent documents are clear, accessible, and understandable.	✚ How does this survey directly benefit the participants and/or the community? ✚ How can we create a protocol that ensures psychological safety (e.g., participant self-efficacy and choice-making). ✚ How can we ensure informed and continued active consent?

DESIGN	Establish a team and develop a workplan.	• Identify key stakeholders (e.g., program manager, grants manager, community members, participants, etc.). • Identify roles and responsibilities. • Develop a workplan.	☐ Engage community members. ☐ Train key stakeholders on trauma-informed principles. ☐ Plan a team meeting to: ○ Establish trust between researchers and relevant stakeholders. ○ Discuss cultural and contextual factors.	✚ How can lived experience and contextual expertise shape the design process? ✚ Are team roles and decision-making processes collaborative?
DESIGN	Select a survey design and draft questions.	• Determine the type of survey and draft survey questions. • Identify existing validated measures or conduct a literature review of concepts related to the purpose of the survey. • Draft survey questions considering clarity, comprehension, relevance, cognitive load, and response options (Orcher, 2007).	☐ Design concise surveys that can be completed within a reasonable amount of time. ☐ Re-emphasize that participants may skip items or end the survey at any time. ☐ Provide content warnings before sensitive questions. ☐ Prioritize cultural relevance to ensure clarity and accuracy in responses. ☐ Pilot the survey and iterate based on feedback from participants.	✚ What is the least burdensome survey type to achieve the purpose of our research? ✚ Are the questions clear, concise, necessary, and contextually appropriate? ✚ Have members from the target population been involved in co-creating questions? ✚ Based on the purpose of the survey, would an informal or formal peer review be recommended?
DESIGN	Identify the target population and sampling strategy.	• Define inclusion criteria for target population based on purpose and objectives of the survey.	☐ Identify risks to target population (and/or community) posed by participation in the survey. ☐ Create a risk-mitigation plan based on identified risks.	✚ Who is represented in the survey—and who is not? ✚ What steps are in place to ensure participants are safe?

DESIGN	Establish data security and management protocols.	• Establish clear protocols for how data will be stored, managed, and protected before beginning data collection.	☐ Prioritize participant safety by only collecting data essential to reaching the research goals. ☐ Avoid collecting names or direct identifiers. ☐ Draft data-sharing agreements with key stakeholders to safeguard personally identifiable information (PII). ☐ Invite participants to review their data to be redacted, if necessary. ☐ Establish a plan for data breaches that includes notifying participants if their data becomes compromised. ☐ Provide participants with contact information for questions and concerns.	✚ How will sensitive information be protected at each stage of the project? ✚ Are participants fully informed about how their data will be stored, used, and shared?

DESIGN	Select administration modalities and design a survey protocol.	• Select the mode of delivery: self-administered or enumerator-administered. • Consider participants’ work schedules, familial responsibilities, and technology access as it relates to administration. • Offer the survey translated into various languages, as needed, for multilingual participants. • Consider compensation for the participants to recognize their time and contributions.	☐ Draft a clear, trauma-informed survey administration protocol. ☐ Consider including breaks to promote emotion regulation and participants’ capacity to make choices. ☐ Provide participant choice in modality where feasible. ☐ Consider accessibility, including participants’ literacy and comfort with technology. If conducting enumerator-administered surveys: ☐ Train enumerators in trauma-informed principles and frameworks. ☐ Pair enumerators with participants to maximize a sense of safety. ☐ Provide support to enumerators who may be exposed to vicarious trauma. ☐ Support enumerator well-being.	✚ Does the survey modality support safety, privacy, and accessibility? ✚ What type of training is needed to ensure the enumerators implement the survey in a trauma-informed way? ✚ Should participants be compensated?

IMPLEMENTATION	Implement the survey.	• Administer the survey according to the pre-defined protocol, have quality assurance processes set up to monitor the data collection process, and remain flexible to adapt as needed. • Ensure participants complete informed consent documents and have access to information about the purpose of the study and how the data will be used.	☐ Provide a sense of predictability and control. ☐ Minimize environmental cues that could mimic trauma conditions. ☐ Follow pre-developed protocols for managing participant distress. ☐ Ensure enumerators or research assistants are familiar with protocols and trained in implementing a risk-mitigation plan.	✚ Are participants reminded they can skip questions or withdraw at any time? ✚ Are staff prepared to respond to signs of distress, including through identifying resources that are available to participants and referral systems put in place? ✚ Are there mechanisms in place for participants to ask questions or submit feedback that will be actively monitored and acted upon?
IMPLEMENTATION	Follow up with participants.	• Thank participants and provide clear contact information for follow-up.	☐ Reinforce appreciation and validate the participants' contributions through follow-up communication. ☐ Share resources that are relevant to the participants' journey. ☐ Invite participants to review and validate preliminary findings.	✚ Are participants aware of how their data will be used? ✚ Do they have access to follow-up support if needed? ✚ What participatory methods can be used to invite participants to share their input (e.g., validating language, assessing question wording, sharing relevant resources), if interested?

ANALYSIS	Conduct data analysis.	• Clean (i.e., correct errors), code (i.e., label and organize data), and interpret your data according to the project's goals.	☐ Engage participants and/or community stakeholders in interpreting results to ensure findings are grounded in lived experience. ☐ Use language that validates varied emotional and behavioral responses without judgment. ☐ Create feedback loops where participants can review and respond to how their input is represented in findings.	✚ How might trauma shape how people respond to specific items? ✚ How are your assumptions influencing interpretation?
DISSEMINATION	Share out the findings.	• Share findings in formats that are accessible, useful, and contextually appropriate.	☐ Adopt a strengths-based approach to present data and findings.	✚ Have we asked participants or community partners how they'd like results shared? ✚ Are findings presented in strengths-based, non-stigmatizing language?