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## **Community Foundation, Wilson Foundation Combine Resources to Support Trauma-Informed Care**

Two local foundations — Rochester Area Community Foundation and the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation — are jointly investing \$244,000 to support eight human services organizations incorporate trauma-informed care into their day-to-day interactions with clients.

Trauma-informed care is an approach that explicitly acknowledges the impact of trauma — including psychological, physical and sexual abuse, neglect, structural racism, homelessness, and community violence — and integrates that understanding into all aspects of serving people’s needs. The goals are to improve the working relationship between clients and staff, alter rules and policies that derail clients’ progress, and intentionally avoid re-traumatizing individuals while trying to assist them.

Implementing a trauma-informed approach is a long-term commitment and requires change to an organization’s culture and way of thinking.

“A single traumatic experience can have long-lasting impact and affect the way people cope with everyday tasks or even respond to a simple question,” says Mary Hartstein, program associate at the Community Foundation and co-convenor of the Trauma-Informed Care Network. “When individuals seek out help, if the social worker, therapist, or office worker doesn’t understand the impact of trauma, their interactions could derail healing and prevent the individuals from moving on with their lives.”

Seven nonprofit organizations and one Monroe County department are receiving grant support for this community-wide, collaborative effort and were among 26 that responded to the joint Request for Proposals announced by both foundations. The grantees are:

- Action for a Better Community
- Catholic Family Center
- Monroe No. 1 BOCES
- Monroe County Department of Human Services
- Society for the Protection and Care of Children
- Villa of Hope
- Willow Domestic Violence Center
- YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County

“This exciting collaboration will further strengthen the ties between some of our community’s largest human services organizations,” says Megan Bell, executive director of the Wilson Foundation. “It will also allow us to be better at interacting with all of our clients and everyone in our community.”

Some of these organizations are in a second or third year of incorporating a trauma-informed approach into their work and this funding will support their continued efforts. At the YWCA of Rochester & Monroe County, which has been rolling out trauma-informed training with staff and clients, can point to improvements through comments made by the women they help:

*“This is the first time I actually felt better about myself.”*

*“Helps me get in touch with my feelings, behaviors and keeps me calm.”*

*“I truly did think in a different way about my problems.”*

The eight participating agencies will establish a cross-disciplinary team to represent them at joint meetings and on conference calls. The goal is for these teams to learn from each other, share data to assess the group’s overall impact, and help to reinforce the fundamentals of trauma-informed care throughout their organizations.

Working together is key to the success of this effort because many of these organizations serve the same populations. When fully implemented, individuals seeking assistance will be treated with the same respect and understanding, no matter which agency is helping them. The goal is for the relationships between staff and clients to be person-centered instead of agency-focused.

Each of the grant recipients will hire a consultant to lead them through the transition to a new way of working. This will be accomplished through the use of customized curricula and coaching; training for staff on incorporating trauma-informed care; trauma-informed programming for clients; and additional time for staff to plan programs and gather and analyze data.

The participating organizations also will establish best practices for their own work that meet guiding principles related to trauma outlined by the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative. Some of the principles include:

- Changing the approach from "What's wrong with you?" to "What's happened to you?";
- Developing a partnership with clients and providing sufficient information and involve them in making decisions rather than have staff proscribe next steps;
- Building trust through consistency and transparency; and
- Making wellness for agency staff a priority to avoid burnout and traumatic work-related experiences.

An independent evaluator will work with the participating organizations to determine the long-term impact of the trauma-informed care practices on client and community outcomes. As more agencies introduce these practices, there is potential to help thousands of individuals improve their lives each year.

As these organizations pursue organizational change to better help their clients, Hartstein and Bell say there may be opportunities for additional funding, based on success with training and evaluation and a need for future support.

This joint-funding initiative comes after more than two years of partnership between the two foundations as co-founders and co-conveners of the local Trauma-Informed Care Network. The purpose of this network, which includes trauma experts, providers, researchers, and advocates, is to explore ways to incorporate trauma-informed care practices and more effectively and compassionately serve clients who have been impacted by trauma.

“This innovative partnership is unique in our community, and hopefully will inspire other funders to collaborate on mutual interests,” says Jennifer Leonard, president and CEO of the Community Foundation.

The goals of the Trauma-Informed Care Network are to:

- Raise awareness of trauma-informed care, including the difference between trauma-informed care and trauma services;
- Encourage organizations to become trained in trauma-informed care and provide resources and educational opportunities to help organizations engage in this process;
- Adopt a community-wide evaluation model to track progress in trauma-informed practices; and
- Advocate for trauma-informed care practices to be incorporated throughout our community.

This funding and the work of the Trauma-Informed Care Network accompanies growing awareness around trauma-informed care not only in our community but also in schools. The focus on trauma has been embraced by other initiatives including the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative and the Greater Rochester Health Foundation's Social-Emotional Behavior Implementation Task Force.

***Rochester Area Community Foundation** serves an eight-county region that includes Genesee, Livingston, Monroe, Ontario, Orleans, Seneca, Yates, and Wayne counties. Last year, the Community Foundation distributed \$28 million in grants and scholarships from more than 1,200 charitable funds created by individuals, families, businesses and organizations.*

***The Wilson Foundation** was created in 1963 by Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson out of a deep sense of commitment to the Rochester community. Over its 50-year history the foundation has been committed to social and community initiatives locally and throughout the nation, particularly through research and advocacy work focusing on the role families play in the homelessness system. Its mission is to improve quality of life through initiating and supporting projects that measurably demonstrate a means of creating a sense of belonging within the family and the community.*

***The Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Network** has been convening local trauma experts since 2014. This group, comprised of providers, researchers, and advocates, works to raise awareness and provide support for agencies working to reduce the stresses of traumatic experiences in the community. The TIC Network, led by two funders — The Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation and Rochester Area Community Foundation — is also exploring ways to further support this work, particularly through research and evaluation. The TIC Network had strong representation in the Rochester-Monroe Anti-Poverty Initiative Trauma Resource Team.*