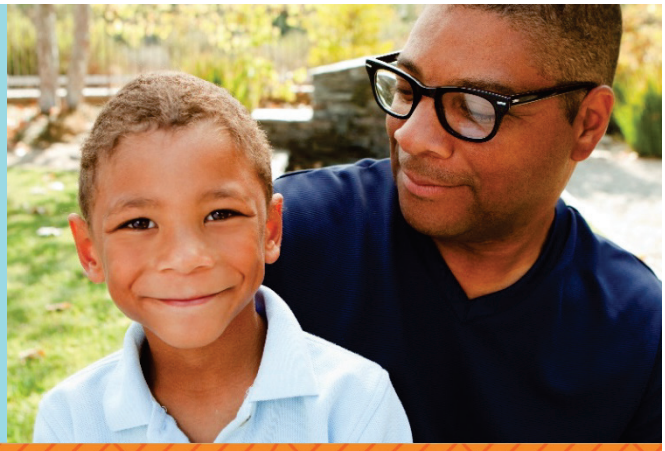
Fostering Futures

Phase 3 Executive Summary



OVERVIEW OF FOSTERING FUTURES

Fostering Futures was a Wisconsin-based initiative developed in response to research about the negative impacts of chronic traumatic stress on a child's growth and development. Stress or adverse experiences during childhood are toxic when they exceed the child's ability to cope and are highly correlated with poor social, financial and health outcomes in adulthood. Families and workers who are involved with the child welfare system are particularly vulnerable to these toxic stresses. Fostering Futures (FF) sought to address the epidemic of toxic childhood stress by integrating trauma-informed care principles into organizational culture, policies, and practices. The overarching goal was to improve the health and well-being of Wisconsin citizens by developing a statewide, interdisciplinary approach.

Beginning in 2013, the work of Fostering Futures has unfolded over multiple phases. At the heart of the work were Core Teams representing county agencies, state departments, tribal nations, and other institutions, and included staff of various roles within those organizations as well as clients with lived experience of the child welfare system.

In the most recent phase, participants on the Core Teams embedded in each organization worked with a local Fostering Futures Coach who provided teams with training, technical assistance, and resources; participated in cross-team convenings; and used the Fostering Futures Rubric which provided detailed descriptions and real-life examples of each of the 7 trauma-informed care (TIC) principles as defined by Fostering Futures and served as a guide for teams in their visioning and progress monitoring.

This report and evaluation focuses on the most recent phase of Fostering Futures: Phase 3 (January 2018-January 2019).

This report highlights:

- Trauma-informed organizational change
- Strategies and measurement tools for evaluating organizational changes
- Retention and recruitment strategies for high-quality employees
- Improving consumer or client satisfaction
- Strategies for achieving compliance with the Family First Prevention and Services Act requirements for trauma-informed assessment and services

Phase 3 Core Teams

20 County Human Service Agencies

- Adams County
- Barron County
- Brown County
- Chippewa County
- Clark County
- Columbia County
- Dane County
- Dodge County
- Door County
- Eau Claire County
- Fond de Lac County
- Grant County
- Kewaunee County
- Manitowoc County
- Milwaukee – Division of Child Protective Services
- Oneida County
- Price County
- Rock County
- Sawyer County
- Sheboygan County

11 Organizations and State Departments

- Department of Corrections
- Department of Health Services – Bureau of Children's Long Term Support Services
- Department of Health Services – Public Health
- Department of Justice: Office of the Attorney General
- Department of Children and Families
- Department of Veterans Affairs
- Department of Workforce Development
- Medical College of Wisconsin – Department of Pediatrics
- Unison, Milwaukee
- Wisconsin State Public Defenders
- Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation

2 Tribal Nations

- Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin
- Oneida Nation

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THE WORK IN ACTION

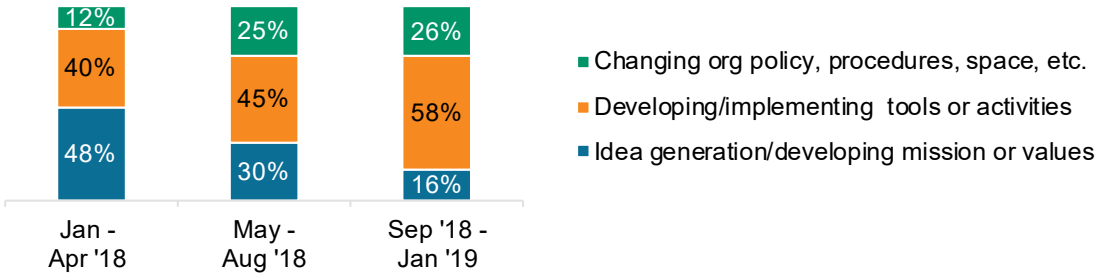
Core Teams were generally highly engaged in the work and were connected with one another.

During the year, teams met regularly and often included organizational leadership in their meetings, although clients with lived experience rarely participated. Teams also took advantage of interacting with one another at convenings and other events to share ideas, strategies, and resources.

Core Teams most commonly engaged in idea generation, but their work evolved as the year progressed.

Teams were actively engaged in developing different ideas for their organizations and, over time, began to implement some of those ideas in the form of TIC presentations and trainings for staff, staff surveys, and the distribution of educational materials. Towards the end of the year, teams were also more likely to be changing organizational policies, procedures, practices, and their physical spaces (see figure below). Teams tended to be most active in the summer and early fall of 2018.

PERCENTAGE BREAKDOWN OF ACTIVITY TYPES IN WHICH CORE TEAMS ENGAGED



Overall, Core Teams valued the support provided by Fostering Futures.

Core Team participants received support and guidance from the Fostering Futures Rubric, their Coaches, and the convenings organized by Fostering Futures. While the majority of Core Team members found these supports to be at least somewhat useful, the extent to which these sources were helpful varied from team to team.

As to be expected in an initiative of this scope, teams experienced a variety of challenges implementing this work.

These included limited time, lack of buy-in from some leaders and staff, turnover in leadership and staff, the sheer complexity of the work which led to fatigue or burnout, financial concerns, and internal organizational issues such as departments within organizations that work within silos, communication challenges, and bureaucratic statutes and rules.

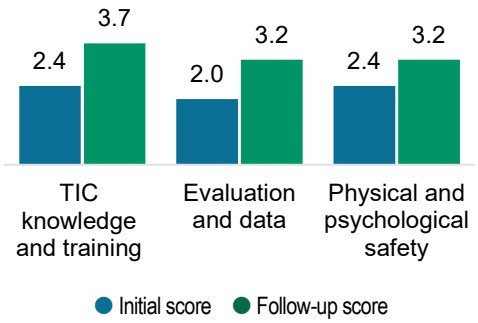
KEY FINDINGS

Fostering Futures impacted organizations and individual participants in their journeys to become more trauma informed. The following details key findings associated with Phase 3 of Fostering Futures.

Organizational impacts

- While most organizations began Phase 3 with some level of TIC knowledge, practices, and supports, results show that both Core Team members and their organizations **grew in TIC-related knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors.**

- Participants reported that their organizations showed growth across different trauma-informed principles, but **improved their TIC-related training and evaluation efforts** in particular.



Note. The rating scale for each question ranges from 1 to 5, where 1=Not at all; 2=Not very much; 3=Somewhat; 4=For the most part; and 5=Very much.

- Organizational leadership was **more effectively communicating the importance of becoming a trauma-informed organization** by the end of Fostering Futures (e.g., the importance of creating a safe environment).

- While somewhat fewer gains were seen in adopting formal trauma-informed organizational policies and practices, participants did note substantial improvement in having written statements and hiring practices that **reflected a commitment to trauma-informed practices**, as well as some **improvements to their organization's culture and physical environment**. These gains transcended organization type, as both county- and state-based organizations showed similar levels and types of progress.

Individual impacts

- Fostering Futures enhanced participants' abilities to **assess their organization's integration of TIC principles** and to identify opportunities for organizational growth.

- Core Team members also reported **increased awareness of trauma and its impact** on individuals, and enhanced abilities to interact with others in trauma-informed ways.

- Beyond these personal gains, **participants closed Phase 3 feeling that their teams had achieved their goals** and that they had individually proposed action steps or ideas for improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS BASED UPON LESSONS LEARNED

Participants identified a number of lessons learned around implementing trauma-informed work and factors that contribute to progress and success.

- Get buy-in from organizational leadership and involve them in the planning and strategy implementation
- Identify champions in your agencies who can help spread the message and engage and inspire others
- Stay on task, focus on outcome milestones, and take small steps
- Celebrate successes, even small ones, to keep staff engaged and minimize burnout
- Maximize opportunities for communication and sharing such as a shared repository for evaluation tools and other resources, a website and other online presence (e.g., social media), and communication with teams via listservs, mailings, or newsletters
- Seek resources to support and plan for process and outcome evaluation at the beginning of project planning

Methodology

The evaluation included a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods. The four primary sources of data included:

Organizational Self-Assessment (OSA) – measures the extent to which an organization has integrated trauma-informed principles (participant self-report)

Participant Feedback Survey (PFS) – measures perceived changes in individual team members attitudes, knowledge, practices, and beliefs related to trauma-informed principles, and reflections on the initiative's impact and challenges (participant self-report)

Coaching Reflections Form (CRF) – summary of team meetings/activities, key accomplishments, support from Coaches, and overall progress (Coach-report)

Participant Observation – observations/notes about team presentations at final convening in January 2019 related to their successes, challenges, and lessons learned (evaluator observations)

Fostering Futures Steering Committee Members

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This summary presents highlights of the *Wisconsin Fostering Futures: Phase 3 Results*. For more information about this report, contact Monica Idzelis Rothe at Wilder Research, 651-280-2657.

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