

NEWS RELEASE

Ilene Shapiro – Summit County Executive
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Summit County Launches Trauma-Informed Care Initiative to Promote Healing, Equity and Community Resilience

SUMMIT COUNTY, OHIO—Summit County officials have announced the launch of a county-wide Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) initiative following the completion of a comprehensive needs assessment by The University of Akron. Backed by the Summit County Opiate Abatement Advisory Council (OAAC), at the request of County Executive Ilene Shapiro and County Council, and the County of Summit Alcohol, Drug Addiction, and Mental Health Services (ADM) Board, the assessment provides a data-informed, evidence-based roadmap to help local systems create a more robust response to trauma. The needs assessment was funded as a joint effort with Summit County's opioid litigation settlement funds and the ADM Board.

Extensive research confirms that unaddressed trauma contributes to worse health outcomes, and higher rates of school dropout, suicide, involvement in the justice system, substance use and workforce instability. Trauma can affect anyone, regardless of its source. Addiction, violence, systemic inequity, and other forms of adversity continue to impact every community across Summit County, cutting across all demographics and backgrounds.

"By recognizing the role of trauma in the lives of those we serve, we will improve our care, our systems, and better address the root cause of substance use along with other community challenges," said County Executive Shapiro. "I am optimistic that what we've learned from the community since undertaking this needs assessment will help us take the next steps towards action and implementation."

The TIC Needs Assessment highlights several key recommendations—the need for coalition leadership, a shared community definition of trauma-informed care, the expansion of peer support through certified peer recovery supporters and support for those working on the front line.

To respond to these needs, community partners will move forward with a coordinated implementation plan focused on building long-term capacity and cultural change. Initial priorities include:

Coalition Activation and Support: With support from the ADM Board, coalitions across Summit County will receive assistance with building, activating, and supporting local coalitions, including strategic planning.

Community Professional Development: A “train-the-trainer” model will prepare diverse local leaders across multiple sectors to provide education and facilitate dialogue around trauma-informed care and healing.

Workforce Development and Wellness: Professionals across sectors will have access to trauma-informed training tailored to their roles along with evidence-based programs such as Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) and Question, Persuade, Refer (QPR).

Professional Development for Behavioral Health Professionals: The ADM Board will support specialized trainings in evidence-based practices for trauma treatment.

Systemic Policy and Practice Integration: Organizations will be supported in embedding trauma-informed principles into internal policies and operations.

Community Outreach and Engagement: Develop simple, relatable messaging for public awareness campaigns and host events where residents learn about the impact of trauma, resilience, and healing practices, with opportunities for dialogue and Q&A.

This initiative reflects a shared commitment to transforming how Summit County understands and responds to trauma not only in health care or human services, but also in schools, courts, workplaces and neighborhoods. By becoming a trauma-informed community, Summit County is taking an important step toward ensuring that all residents, regardless of their background or experiences, have the opportunity to heal, thrive and contribute.

In 2024, the ADM Board developed a 3-year workforce plan addressing wellness efforts and professional development for organizations and their staff. According to Jeannie Cool, the ADM Board’s Manager of Evidence-based Practices and Outcomes, “The ADM Board is excited to be a part of this initiative as it aligns with work that is currently happening in our system to support workforce so that individuals can continue to provide exceptional care.”

Trauma-Informed Care is an approach that recognizes the widespread effects of trauma on individuals, families, and communities. It shifts the question from “What’s wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?” and seeks to embed core principles such as safety, trust, collaboration, empowerment, peer support, and cultural humility into every aspect of service delivery.

Whether you're a community leader, educator, business owner, or neighbor, you have a role to play in creating a safer, more compassionate Summit County. It takes all of us to build a community where everyone feels seen, supported, and empowered.

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