

Trauma Sensitive Schools: The roadmap of an experience of capacity building and certification in Portugal

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Schools are **front-line institutions**, present in the life of every children and youth, and can display a **critical role in the provision of trauma sensitive care**.

The epidemiology of developmental trauma, and the recognition of its consequences for learning and development, demands a greater accessibility to trauma sensitive care that can reduce the risk of re-victimization and other negative effects, **contributing to protection and flourishing of children**.

Trauma Sensitive Schools© is a **capacity building and certification program**, pioneer in Portugal, currently being implemented in a municipality in Northern Portugal, involving **36 schools from kindergarten to secondary**.

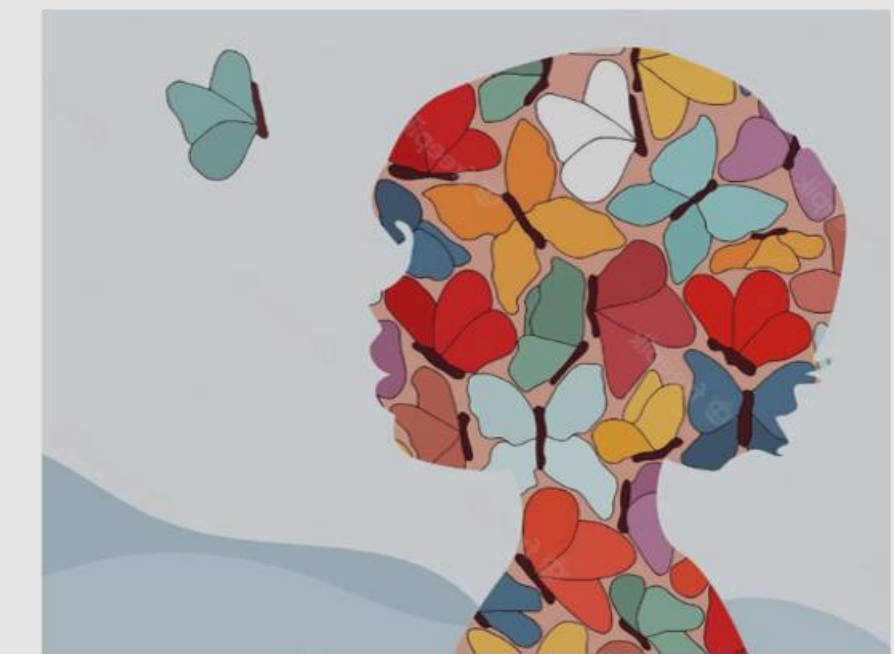
The program is based on a **whole school approach** - which summons for the participation of school leaders, teachers, assistant staff and psychologists.

Aims of Trauma Sensitive Schools©

To spread basic knowledge on trauma and trauma sensitive care provision

To support the distinct roles of school staff in understanding and acting with students considering the effects of adversity and trauma

To promote change in policies and practices in schools, fostering alignments to principles of TSC



Design of Trauma Sensitive Schools©

Diagnosis

School Community assessment about: Training, Supervision, Policies and practices in screening, evaluation and referral, Infrastructure

(TSCEQ-SS – Veiga, Rocha & Negrão, 2021)

Training of Professionals

Whole School involvement: Leaderships, Teachers, Staff, Psychologists

Topics (e.g.): basic literacy on adversity/trauma and its impacts; management of discipline and behavior aligned with TSC

Consulting

Group of school advocates
Implementation and monitoring of a change plan
Supervision
Advanced training (e.g. mourning, staff self-care)

School Certification

Project follows as Evidence Based Approach
2 school years

Trauma Sensitive Schools© the balance so far...

Challenges

Difficulties in **initial involvement** of teachers and other staff in an area not immediately perceived as their territory and competence - **mental health vs. teaching and education**

Low motivation and involvement of an aged working class, currently with many struggles related to their professional role.

Change of perspective and knowledge regarding the effects of adversity and trauma accomplished by school staff

Mobilization of school community (professionals but also reaching parents) in analyzing, discussing, and creating change in a culturally silenced topic.

Strengths

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