

inSocialWork Podcast Series

Episode 98 - Professor Susan Green and Dr. Thomas Nochajski: The Institute on Trauma and Trauma-Informed Care (ITTIC)

[00:00:08] Welcome to living proof, a podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. We're glad you could join us today. The series Living Proof examines social work research and practice that makes a difference in people's lives. I'm your host Adjoa Robinson and I'd like to take a moment to address you our regular listeners. We know you have enjoyed our podcast as evidenced by the more than 200000 downloads to date thanks to you all. We'd like to know what value you may have found in the podcast. We'd like to hear from all of you practitioners researchers students but especially our listeners who are social work educators. How are you using the podcast in your classrooms. Just go to our website at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu forwards slash podcast and click on the contact us tab. Again thanks for listening and we look forward to hearing from you. Hi again from Buffalo. We're summerlike spring weather has our residents flocking to our beaches and downtown waterfront. I'm Peter Sobota. In this episode UB School of Social Work faculty member Susan green and Thomas Nochajski introduced the new Institute for trauma and trauma informed care. They serve as coach directors of they describe the series of events and experiences that led to the development of the institute and how the needs of the service delivery systems in the Buffalo area led to the development of and continue to inform the institute's mission. Our guests define what constitutes a trauma informed approach in the context of the service delivery system.

[00:02:04] The current activities of the Institute and the future plans for the institute both in the western New York area and beyond. Susan Green LCSW. is clinical associate professor here at the UB School of Social Work. She teaches or has taught courses and social work interventions with children adults families groups and communities as well as trauma theory and treatment risk and resilience and diversity. Over the last several years she has worked as a clinician and as a consultant at two different Child and Family agencies in the Buffalo area. In addition to being a sought after trainer she volunteers with various community agencies and projects in the Buffalo community including a mentoring program with young girls and assisted living facility at a substance abuse recovery and housing program. Thomas Nochajski Ph.D. is research associate professor at the School of Social Work associate research scientist at UB's Research Institute on Addictions and associate research scientist at Buffalo's State Colleges Center for Health and Social Research. Dr. Nochajski's current research focuses on the initiation and persistence of drinking and drug driving the use of brief harm reduction focused interventions with convicted DWI offenders and the effects of a family based prevention program for children of alcoholics. His professional interests include prevention of alcohol and other drug problems with children and families. Screening assessments treatment of the criminal justice population program and practice Evaluation and Research Methodology. Hi I'm Sue Greene and I'm Tom Nochajski. And we're here today to introduce you to our new institute at the school of social work at the University at Buffalo called the Institute on trauma and trauma informed care. We're very excited at this opportunity that we have.

[00:04:00] So we're going to give you a little bit of background in regards to how the institute came to fruition. Yeah it goes back to the point where the school started thinking about moving its curriculum from what it was to a more troubling form human rights curriculum. With that in mind we elected to do a project for a re accreditation process. And during that project we learned quite a bit about the community and about the exposure they've had to trauma informed care. What we certainly have realized as we were going through the accreditation processes that the agencies organizations that we were interfacing with indicated that they were in a position that they were certainly noticing that they weren't feeling overly effective with actually taking into consideration the possible trauma histories that they themselves may have let alone the individuals that they were

working with in terms of client base. So with that being said it certainly helped inform our thoughts around how do we prepare our students to be in a better position in the workforce once they graduate and in line with that as we started thinking about this issue. We also start to look at. All right well what about the organizations that are out in our community hall are they doing these things and again with some of the data. What did we started to learn that they were very interested in this process. But some had little or no knowledge about what trauma informed care truly meant. And you know one of the key pieces that we learned while researching what really is trauma and form care what are we talking about.

[00:05:48] Is it really the mantra that kept coming up was people being in a position of understanding that we as providers really need to start asking what has happened to this person versus what's the matter with this person or what is wrong and that really created a synergy for us to become really interested in understanding how is it that we could do our work in a way that could be more effective and taken that into direction. We also learned I assume mentioned earlier many of those in the helping professionals social workers out there working in the field have had their own trauma experiences and are also repeatedly exposed to trauma experiences of those they work with. And as such the organization needs not only to focus on clients but they need to consider the staff and a true trauma informed approach does that. And in fact a true trauma approach takes the organization first before thinking about how to influence clients. It recognizes that if you don't treat the staff in a trauma informed way how are they even going to treat the clients in a trauma informed way. So our Dean who is Dr. Nancy Smith has certainly given time and I an opportunity as being called directors of the institute to explore how is it that as a school we could position ourselves to number one do research to help provide students the opportunity to learn what it is to be a trauma informed clinician if you will also to learn how to provide trauma specific treatments if need be and also how it is that we as a school could position ourselves to partner with other disciplines so that our service delivery systems can be more trauma informed. And I think that's key.

[00:07:59] We're not thinking of specifically focusing in one direction or another. What we are considering is that the issue of trauma informed care cuts across disciplines it cuts across staff clients and that we want to be able to consider how we can help the community with those issues as we move forward. So we are certainly in our developing phase and we're very excited actually of many of the opportunities that have already started in civil just talk about a couple of things. First and foremost I'd like to highlight that we've invited four people to be part of what we're calling an expert advisory panel. And you'll see on our Web site that we have the bio's and pictures of those individuals that are part of the panel and these folks are experts in their fields and they come from different backgrounds. We have an individual Roger fallot who is a trauma informed care expert if you will and that he is his models the model we've used at the school and in our devolvement of any surveys and materials. We've used his his ideas his and now Harris ideas and then we have some of it to develop seeking safety program for treating PTSD and substance abuse concurrently and who's currently working on another element for that group. So we have a drug care individual we have a trauma informed care and we have an individual Prochnik Well who is focused on veterans and veterans issues and we feel that given the two current wars and the winding down of those wars are going to be of a lot of that and care and help and families of veterans as well also. So he is a key moment for us.

[00:09:50] And then we have a supporter who is from a theoretical side understanding of trauma and the impact of trauma and has now developed for the school and myself care component that is our Web site as well. So we have a wide range of individuals on our advisory panel that we feel will be exceptionally helpful to us. And all of these individuals have indicated that they are committed to this idea of creating systems of care throughout the world if you will that could we could all be in a position of just doing better work. So they will act as advisers and consultants if you will for the projects that the institute will sponsor. At this point we are partnering actually with several agencies

right now in the western New York area who have asked us to come in and evaluate with them where their agency organization is right now in regards to being trauma informed specifically on the organizational level as Tom indicated earlier you know first and foremost we need to start by looking at who are we. Within our organization and how is it that we do our work.

[00:11:05] So Tom working with some students specifically from both our Ph.D. program and Master's program we'll be collecting data and providing then basically a summarization of where the organization is at this point in time and we will be in a position with the organizations then to possibly provide further consultation if not collaborate in some training opportunities another part of what we are doing with the institute as we are certainly looking at what research opportunities are available and we're in conversation with other disciplines let alone with a couple of agency sites around collecting data and doing specific research around trauma specific treatments and or trauma informed approaches. We have several students actually who have approached either time or Urai who want to work with us either in the capacity of being an intern being understudy in terms of having an independent study and or having part of their work with the institute be part of their actual Ph.D. endeavor. Tom what else am I missing at this point. I think that's that's pretty well where we are in terms of looking for things partnering with agencies out in the community hopefully that we can get more of this and I did a presentation a couple of days ago and at the presentation I was asked if we had been contacted or had contacted other other counties and so on. So in the future we would love to have that type of database grow around trauma informed care because from the academic side the scholarly side this is something that Roger has indicated and Lisa both results have indicated is that there seems to be a really real lack of good solid evidence solid community for trauma informed care and its impact on clients and staff specifically the Stepside so you know honestly it would be very safe to say time that we really are looking forward to future contact with any or many of you that might be listening to this. We actually are hoping that we could branch out beyond Western New York certainly and know that we need to have this be a worry that this is just the beginning of what we think is a very exciting opportunity in our fields.

[00:13:42] The one thing that I am thinking of is that we have a temporary plan and it's it's probably more permanent than temporary that April of next year which would be 2013. We are looking to have a conference held in the western New York area probably in Buffalo that we will highlight and some of our expert advisory panels. Let alone invite presentations around the idea of trauma informed care which I hope that those who are out there who are interested in trauma informed care or who currently trying to implement trauma informed care or have implemented trauma informed care when we put the abstract notice out. Please please take good note of it. Send us any information. And that's it. Thank you for listening and we look forward to hearing from you. Now you've been listening to Susan Green and Tom Nochajski discuss the Institute for trauma and trauma informed care and living proof. Hi I'm Nancy Smyth professor and dean at the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. For more information about who we are our history our programs and what we do we invite you to visit our website at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu. At UB we're living proof that social work makes a difference in people's lives.