

Record Review Through a Trauma-Informed Lens

Records may include mentions of abuse, indicators of instability, documentation of psychological and/or functional changes after trauma or treatment.

School Records - Can be helpful for providing a window into the client's level of adult supervision and family stability as a child. They can also provide helpful before and after comparisons of function if there are situations when there was a known trauma.

- Attendance (or lack thereof) and academic performance.
- Adequacy of resources made available to the client (in cases where there were clear emotional, behavioral or learning needs).
- Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and evals – In order to qualify the child must have an identified disability. If the client had an IEP, it means they must have had a psychoeducational evaluation that was done and established/documented a problem. In addition to describing the learning challenges, these evals often have useful psychosocial summaries.

Child Protective Services - Documentation of quality and quantity of involvement for the client as well as other members of the family of origin.

Client Legal Records

- May indicate that problems were temporally related to substance use, subsequent traumas, or periods without mental health care.
- May also provide useful information re: diagnosis in controlled environments where substance use is not a confounder.

Substance use history – Depending on timing may help to explain or place some antisocial behaviors in context. Could also be an indicator of self-medicating trauma symptoms.

Mental Health – Can be helpful for showing that client has responded to treatment in the past. Can also help to show potential for rehabilitation if they have not had the opportunity to benefit from treatment interventions for trauma, mental health comorbidities and/or substance use disorders. Keep in mind that much mental healthcare is provided by PCPs.

- Diagnoses – Information regarding prior diagnoses that may be accurate or that may be clues that PTSD or Complex PTSD has been misdiagnosed as bipolar, psychosis, or antisocial personality disorder due to symptom overlap.
- Documentation of trauma and family history
- Periods of symptoms improvement, prior medications, and therapeutic responses

Employment and Tax Records - Can be helpful for providing a window into the client's previous levels of function. They can also provide helpful before and after comparisons of function if there are situations when there was a known trauma or bolster assertion that with treatment/support the client has demonstrated the ability to better function in society.

Parent Mental Health and Legal Records - Can indicate genetic pre-dispositions, parenting challenges, modeling of problematic behaviors, intergenerational trauma.