



Los Angeles County DMH, Continuum of Care Reform Division

Trauma/Resilience Tip of the Week: Underlying Needs

Marty Beyer, Ph.D. explains “underlying needs” drives behaviors. When working with children and teenagers, we are quick to focus on “problem behaviors” and attempt to “fix” instead of understanding the needs behind behaviors. Focusing only on behavior can be ineffective and harmful while possibly putting the children/teenagers, family, and community at risk. It is important to understand how children and teenagers manifest their needs with behaviors as a result of traumatic experience (e.g. isolating self to avoid triggers, self-harming to forget trauma, and etc.) and provide tailored services and supports based on needs.



Characteristics of Strong Needs Statements :

- Specific
- Not adult imperatives
- Not services disguised as needs
- Not in jargon
- Recognize the effects of trauma on behavior
- Reflect voice and choice for the youth and family