



Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) Approach to Contraceptive Counseling



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Goals of Trauma-Informed Care

US Office of Population Affairs¹

- The goal of universal trauma precautions is **not disclosure but to acknowledge** the presence and impact of trauma
- It assumes that **all patients have been exposed to negative conditions or traumatic events**
- Providers should recognize the high prevalence of trauma and its many documented effects on sexual and reproductive health and on an individual's health in general

ACOG²

- TIC prioritizes **understanding the effects of trauma, fostering safety** for both patients and providers, and **supporting survivors** throughout their healing journey

Goals of TIC

Benefits of TIC

Screening

ACEs Aware Screening
Tool Example

Signs and Symptoms of
Trauma

Agency Guidance

Additional Resources

Summary

ACOG, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; TIC, trauma-informed care.

[1] Romer SE, et al. *Am J Prev Med.* 2024;67(6S):S41-S86.

[2] Caring for Patients Who Have Experienced Trauma. Committee Opinion No. 825. ACOG; 2021. www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2021/04/caring-for-patients-who-have-experienced-trauma.

Benefits of Trauma-Informed Care



Why TIC Matters

- Enhances patient engagement and health outcomes
- Supports recovery by recognizing the impact of trauma and integrating that understanding into care delivery
- Reduces provider burnout by creating emotionally safe environments for both the patients and the healthcare team

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Screening for Trauma

Trauma screening is an approach that refers to a brief, focused tool used to determine whether an individual has experienced or had reactions to traumatic events¹

ACOG²

- **OB/GYNs should implement universal screening for current trauma and a history of trauma**
- Calls on **OB/GYNs** to recognize the prevalence of trauma and its impact on patients and healthcare teams, and emphasizes the importance of trauma-informed approaches to care delivery
 - Trauma is linked to **chronic pelvic pain, STIs, unintended pregnancy, conflicted feelings about sexuality, and postpartum attachment challenges**

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[1] Romer SE, et al. *Am J Prev Med.* 2024;67(6S):S41-S86. [2] Caring for Patients Who Have Experienced Trauma. Committee Opinion No. 825. ACOG; 2021. www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2021/04/caring-for-patients-who-have-experienced-trauma.

Example of a Screening Tool for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

WHAT ARE ACEs¹?

- ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (ages 0–17 years)
- Examples include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- Also included are aspects affecting the environment that can undermine one's sense of safety and stability, such as unstable housing or access to adequate food

ACEs Aware^{2,3} provides an example of an ACE screening questionnaire given to adults

It includes 10 questions about ACEs in the following domains:

- **Household dysfunction**
- **Food insecurity**
- **Mental health**
- **Emotional support**
- **Physical/Emotional Abuse**



[Click here to view the ACEs Aware Questionnaire](#)

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ACE, adverse childhood experience.

[1] About Adverse Childhood Experiences. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2024. www.cdc.gov/aces/about/index.html. [2] Adverse Childhood Experience Questionnaire for Adults. ACEs AWARE, California Surgeon General's Clinical Advisory Committee; 2020. www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ACE-Questionnaire-for-Adults-Identified-English-rev.7.26.22.pdf. [3] About ACEs AWARE. California Department of Health Care Services; 2025. www.acesaware.org/about/.

Recognizing the Signs and Symptoms of Trauma

Trauma is an event or series of events perceived as physically or emotionally harmful, with lasting adverse effects on well-being^{1,2}

Emotional and Psychological Symptoms³

- Depression
- Anxiety or fear
- Sadness or hopelessness
- Feeling disconnected

Physical Symptoms³

- Insomnia
- Nightmares
- Racing heartbeat
- Being easily startled

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Trauma-Informed Care Approach to Contraceptive Care

These national organizations have endorsed use of a TIC approach to counseling:

- [ACOG](#)
- [Quality Family Planning Guidance / OPA](#)

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ACOG: Guidance on TIC Approach to Contraceptive Counseling

Trauma-Informed Approach to Counseling

- Contraceptive counseling may be subject to undue influence, such as a counselor’s personal biases¹
- TIC ensures that OB/GYNs can acknowledge that many patients have experienced trauma and encourage clinicians and office staff to implement strategies to prevent re-traumatization²
- ACOG highlights the “**four Cs**” of TIC²
 - **Calm** – Promote a calm environment
 - **Contain** – Ask about trauma in a way that preserves safety
 - **Care** – Encourage self-care and compassion
 - **Cope** – Offer tools that foster resilience and hope

ACOG Committee Statement No. 1, Patient-Centered Contraceptive Counseling¹

Use **shared decision-making** to help patients achieve their reproductive goals



Prioritize patients’ values, preferences, and life experiences in the selection or discontinuation of a contraceptive method



Acknowledge and address historical and ongoing reproductive mistreatment



Recognize and mitigate personal and institutional biases

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OB/GYN, obstetrician-gynecologist; ACOG, American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists; TIC, trauma-informed care.

[1] Patient-Centered Contraceptive Counseling. Committee Statement No. 1. ACOG; 2022. www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-statement/articles/2022/02/patient-centered-contraceptive-counseling. [2] Caring for Patients Who Have Experienced Trauma. Committee Opinion No. 825. ACOG; 2021. www.acog.org/clinical/clinical-guidance/committee-opinion/articles/2021/04/caring-for-patients-who-have-experienced-trauma.

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OPA: Guidance on TIC Approach to Contraceptive Counseling

Key Considerations and Actions to Implement TIC¹

Before Exam	During Exam	After Exam
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consider the physical environment• Offer a support person• Establish rapport• Discuss goals and involve patients in the treatment process• Ask how you can support the patient throughout visit• Discuss the exam process• Repeatedly assure patients that they are in control• Observe for signs of distress	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explain the steps of the exam• Describe what you are going to do, and why• Ask questions to gain permission at every step of the examination or procedure• Allow the patient to be in control• Practice preventive strategies to avoid retraumatization• Watch for discomfort or distress• Stop exam immediately if the patient is distressed	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Allow the patient to get dressed prior to finishing the visit• Discuss and summarize the visit• Make an action plan with the patient for follow-up• Share the timeline for any follow-up needs• Share contact information for further discussion• Provide referrals and resources• Confirm documentation preferences

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Trauma-Informed Care

Trauma-Informed Care Resource Center¹

The platform includes:

- Foundational knowledge of trauma and TIC
- In-the-field examples from health systems and providers
- Practical tools for implementing trauma-informed approaches

[Visit the TIC Resource Center](#)

Trauma-Informed Systems Initiative²

The TIS Initiative is being undertaken by the San Francisco Department of Public Health to embed TIC into its healthcare delivery system

Participating organizations commit to:

- Leading from a trauma-informed lens
- Embedding TIS trainers within organizations as content experts
- Cross-system collaboration

[Learn more about San Francisco's TIS Initiative](#)

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TIC, trauma-informed care; TIS, trauma-informed system.

[1] What Is Trauma-Informed Care? Center for Health Care Strategies; 2025. www.traumainformedcare.chcs.org/what-is-trauma-informed-care/. [2] Trauma-Informed Systems Initiative (TIS). San Francisco Department of Public Health; 2025. www.sf.gov/information--trauma-informed-systems-initiative-tis.

Trauma Informed Care

Summary



- TIC** Supports recovery by recognizing the impact of trauma and integrating that understanding into care delivery¹
- Screening** The ACEs Aware questionnaire is one example of a screening tool being adopted to identify trauma²
- Guidance** ACOG¹ and OPA³ have endorsed a TIC approach to counseling
- Contraceptive Counseling** TIC emphasizes shared decision-making and respect for autonomy to avoid retraumatization¹

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