

# Section 16 – Trauma Overview

***“By understanding the impact of trauma on children’s development, beliefs, and behaviors, judges can become more effective in addressing the unique needs and challenges of traumatized children and adolescents involved in the juvenile and family court system.”***

**- National Child Traumatic Stress Network**

Children and youth involved in the dependency system have often been the subject of a traumatic event or have been exposed to a traumatic event that occurred to a parent or sibling. Judges who are well-versed and sensitive to the potential behaviors resulting from traumatic experiences are better equipped to reduce ongoing trauma for children and parents. Indeed, these informed judges can respond to trauma-reactive behaviors in a manner that is both helpful and healing.

This section will aid judges in the early recognition of trauma reactions, often seen in children and parents involved with the dependency system. Three primary and three additional resources are provided.

- I. This article provides an overview focused on trauma and delinquent youth, short and to the point. While the focus is delinquent youth, the concepts are easily applied to dependent youth. The resource provides helpful definitions of key terms (i.e., different types of trauma, hypervigilance, resiliency, among others). There are useful suggestions for Juvenile Judges to encourage Trauma Assessments, among other system-wide changes. Several related websites and citations are also included. (See, *Buffington, K., Dierkhising, C. B., & Marsh, S. C., 2010*)
- II. The Pennsylvania State Roundtable’s Trauma Workgroup provides practical resources for judges, including educational videos, handouts, and recommendations for best practices. (See, *Office of Children & Families in the Courts: Trauma, n.d.*)
- III. This publication highlights the need for consistent trauma screenings, the environment’s role on traumatic stress reactions, and the prevalence of secondary traumatic stress in the court. (See, *Stoffel, E., Korthase, A., & Gueller, M., 2019*)