

Trauma/Toxic Stress Checklist

Children who have experienced trauma/toxic stress/not feel safe may exhibit a range of symptoms. This can be evident from one pronounced symptom or a combination. The below is intended to be a checklist for considering the symptoms and whether they may be related to trauma/stress/not feeling safe. It is not intended to be comprehensive nor is there a specific number of symptoms that would indicate trauma/stress response. You can find additional symptoms and recommended supports based on symptoms in this short educators guide: [Working with Students Exposed to Trauma: What Trauma Can Look Like in the Classroom \(and School\)](#) adapted from: [Helping Traumatized Children Learn](#)

Changes in School Performance

- Increased/High absenteeism
- Increased suspensions/expulsions
- Lower GPA

Impairment in Learning

- Difficulty comprehending cause-and effect relationships
- Taking or understanding another's perspective
- Difficulty attending to classroom tasks
- Difficulty with executive functions (e.g., concentration, attention, memory, organization, focus and process information, problem solving and/or planning)
- Difficulty engaging in the curriculum
- Difficulty with social and emotional communication

Physical & Emotional Distress

- Conflicts with peers/teachers
- Reactivity or Impulsivity (e.g., over/under reacting)
- Frustration and anxiety
- Aggression
- Defiance (e.g., resisting transition/change, blowing up when corrected etc.)
- Withdrawal
- Perfectionism
- Physical Symptoms, such as frequent stomach or headaches

Developed from:

- *S.F. Cole, etc. (2005) [Helping Traumatized Children Learn Vol. 1](#), Massachusetts Advocates for Children, Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative in collaboration with Harvard Law School*
- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. [Child Trauma Toolkit for Educators](#) (October 2008).