



## From Power Over to Power With

*Rainbow's Transformation To A  
Trauma Informed Culture*

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## Rainbow Services

### Mission:

Rainbow Services provides shelter and support to anyone impacted by domestic violence, empowering them to move beyond trauma, towards safety & stability.

### Vision:

Everyone deserves respect, love & safety.

**2006** **Harm Reduction introduced:** Rainbow first eliminated the rule of “you have to have been sober for at least 180 days” for survivors entering emergency shelters. Accordingly, policies that no longer worked for survivors were challenged.

**2007** **Improved Services for Vulnerable Populations:** Stepped-up attention to creating more welcoming environments for persons living with disabilities, LGBTQ, mental health issues and/or substance use issues.

**2009** **Major revisions in shelter rules and guidelines:** Focused on the way rules recreated the power and control dynamic. Changed from using the word rules to expectations and guidelines.

**2009** **Beyond Trauma group introduced:** Continued emphasis on staff training from evidence-based models that have been used with trauma survivors.

**2011** **Strong emphasis on training at executive and leadership levels;** development of curricula for support groups incorporating trauma theory; the Director of Programs join Blue Shield of California Foundation’s Strong Field Leadership program.

**2012/2013** **Trauma Informed Care (TIC) for DV providers/Trauma-Informed Non-Violent Systems of Care launched:** ECHO Parenting partnered with Rainbow to include non-violent parenting class in the shelter, and trained staff on non-violent parenting and trauma-informed care. The training was made organization-wide. Individual Brief Therapy model introduced. Strengths based Organization work is emphasized as the Director of Legal Services joins the Strong Field Leadership Development program.

**2014** **Psychologically Informed Environments (PIE) adopted and adapted:** Director of Programs participated in a transatlantic exchange program and was able to learn about and see in action the PIE model. Makes clear that a welcoming physical and socio-emotional environment matters for participants and staff; that on-going reflective practice is a key to supporting staff; and a therapeutic framework and practice must be incorporated across the organization.

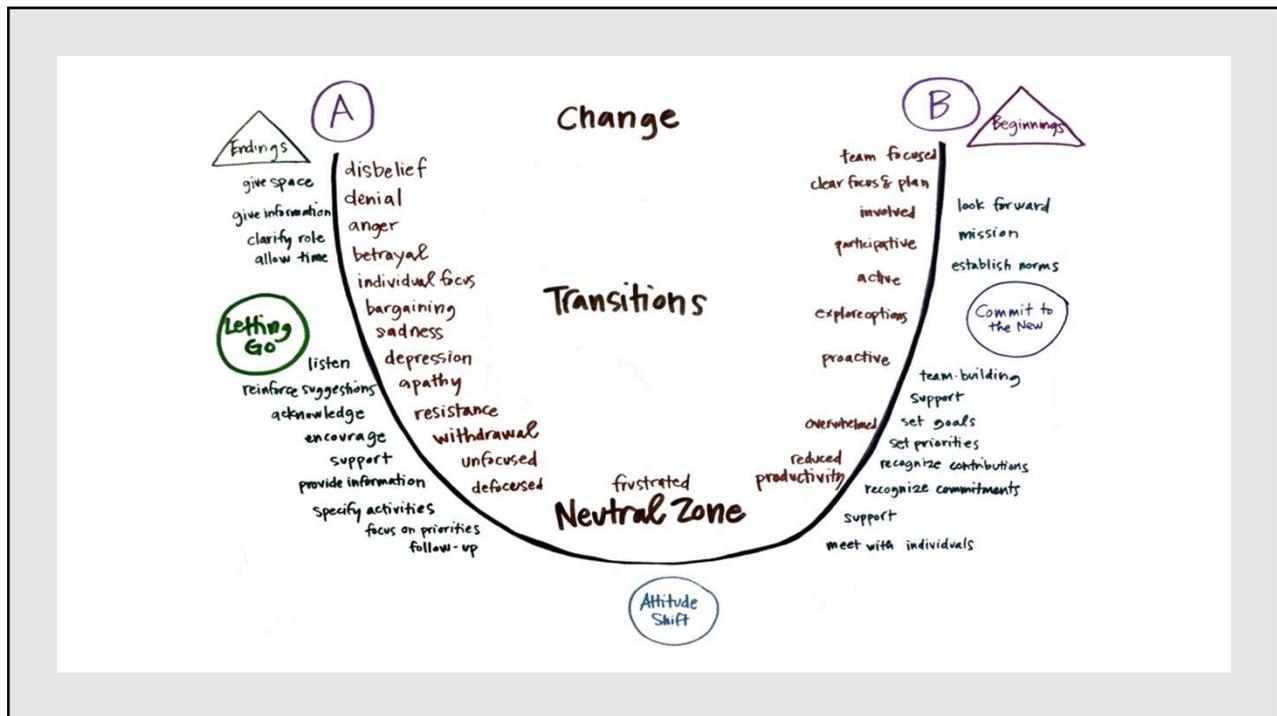
**2015** **An infusion of BSCF grant funds helps power Rainbow’s organization-wide strategic transition to trauma-informed care –** focused on planning and capacity-building.

**2016** **Co-design of an evaluation of Rainbow’s TI C model occurs;** establishment of a supportive service provider network happens. A leadership program for coordinators was launched in partnership with A Thousand Joys.

**2017** Several changes in operations, including: quarterly all-staff trainings; monthly reflective supervision practice for residential staff; trauma support groups in English & Spanish; executive leadership incorporates TIC principles.

**2018** Evaluation by National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health completed; sharing of practice documents and other training resources available on Rainbow Services website.

**TBD** Work to do: Working with people with untreated psychiatric illness; growing the culture shift beyond our walls and into broader community; engaging with more restorative and transformative justice promising approaches and partners; trauma informed treatment for people who harm; closing the gap between vision and practice



## POWER OVER / POWER WITH

**Power Over:** Is about creating systems that provide for an expedient way to move people through the process while satisfying the needs of organizations and funders. It is *“I am the expert, and you are the damaged person in need of help.”*

**Power With:** Survivor is the expert in their own life (also a harm reduction principle), shifting the power from the professional “expert” to a role in which they offer information and collaborate/partner with the survivor in their healing journey.

### The need for change...

*“I was a residential worker then – there was definitely a lot of power over. A lot of control over client schedules, what they eat, what was best for them and their kids. It was so hard for staff! We were the ones who had to deal directly with participants, and in a super-uncomfortable, demeaning and demanding way. But we had no other choice – this was our job. The management at the time put a lot of pressure on staff. Participants were scared, angry, and avoided interacting with many staff when they could. Staff came and went. Participants were coming and going without the supports they needed. No one really felt good about the work we were doing or felt very hopeful for participants.”*

*-Long time Rainbow Staff Member*

According to SAMHSA's concept of a trauma-informed approach, a program, organization, or system that is trauma informed:

- **Realizes** the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- **Recognizes** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- **Responds** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- Seeks to actively **prevent re-traumatization**.

*SAMSA has developed six principles which an organization can use to determine whether their approach is trauma-informed:*

<p><b>1. Safety</b></p> <p>Throughout an organization, the staff and people they serve feel physically and psychologically safe; the physical setting must be safe and interactions should promote a sense of safety.</p>	<p><b>2. Trustworthiness and Transparency</b></p> <p>Organizational operations and decisions are conducted with transparency with the goal of building and maintaining trust among clients, families and staff.</p>	<p><b>3. Peer Support</b></p> <p>Other individuals who have experienced trauma can serve as key partners in recovery from trauma.</p>
<p><b>4. Collaboration and Mutuality</b></p> <p>Partnering and leveling of power differences happen between staff and clients and among staff.</p>	<p><b>5. Empowerment, Voice and Choice</b></p> <p>Individual strengths are recognized, built on, and validated and new skills are developed as needed.</p>	<p><b>6. Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues</b></p> <p>The organization incorporates policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic and cultural needs of individuals served; there is a responsiveness to gender and consideration for historical trauma.</p>

**SUMMARY OF  
EVALUATION  
FINDINGS**  
*Staff  
Perspective*

Staff increased knowledge of trauma-informed practice  
Staff identify supportive experiences in the workplace  
Staff report their practice as being more trauma-informed

***Areas for continued Growth:***

Clarity regarding boundaries with participants  
Coping with high levels of change and staff turnover  
Difficulty working with outside agencies who are not trauma-informed

*"Rainbow staff make me feel comfortable sharing things about myself on my own terms and at my own pace."*

*Participants Perspective*

**94.3%** of participants better understand how they were affected by violence.

**97.8%** of participants report their child or children feel better about themselves.

***"I more often feel that I matter as a person and I am more likely to trust my own sense of what will help keep me safe"***

## What does Rainbow Services look and feel like on-the-ground today?

There is improved flexibility, consistency, and adaptability to the needs of the participants and their families; it builds hope, decreases shame, and empowers survivors to envision their futures. It builds voice and choice in their lives.

### Inside the organization one can see:

- Commitment to learning, both for staff and participants
- Individual supervision of staff ● Group supervision of staff
  - Reflective practice sessions for direct service staff
  - Regular staff training & professional development
  - Wellness events led by the “Cheerness” Committee
- Regular evaluation and learning ● Organizational values awards

## Check-In

### Support and encourage staff

*Assign self-care partners*

*Surround yourself with positive affirmations and quotes*

*Celebrate Success*

**Be comfortable saying "NO"**

Create informal staff support groups  
Open Communication

## Reach Out

*Be aware of how others feel*

Allow space for discomfort

Share our learning

*A "Self Care Checklist" created by Rainbow staff*

### Movement from Rules to Guidelines

- Many revisions over the years which included essential input from shelter staff
- Main decision-rule: "Does this rule/guideline/expectation have anything to do with SAFETY?"
- Questions staff ask themselves: What risk are we taking if we let go of this rule? What may be the benefit of letting go?
- Being mindful of our language - "We offer these services, what do you think will work best for you and your family?"

## TIC Organizational Responsibilities

- Leadership consistently models and communicates a TIC message
- Investment in learning and ongoing transformation
- Investment in the work environment—facility maintenance to create a welcoming place
- Shared leadership
- Solicit input; demonstrate how staff input makes positive change

## Trauma-Informed Supervision

- Teach people how to debrief
- Coach on how to keep things in perspective
- Strengths-based
- Fail forward principals
- Normalize and address secondary trauma; create structure to discuss self-care
- Transparency

**Be curious versus critical**

## LESSONS LEARNED

**Lesson #2** Expect some staff to decide that TIC is not for them, and have practices in place to facilitate healthy, supportive staffing changes.

**Lesson #1** Sustainable change requires agency leadership to adopt and continuously support TIC practices.

**Lesson #3** Investing in training/professional development for supervisors and staff is a core operating expense in this field, not a luxury or bonus.

## John's Story





## Group Discussion

How does power over show up in your practice?

How does power with show up in your practice?

In what ways are you applying TIC principles/practices?

What have you learned that you may want to try out?



## *Our Partners and References:*

**National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma &  
Mental Health**

[nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org](http://nationalcenterdvtraumamh.org)

**National Center for Trauma-Informed Care |  
SAMHSA**

[samhsa.gov/nctic](http://samhsa.gov/nctic)

**Domestic Violence Evidence Project**

[dvevidenceproject.org](http://dvevidenceproject.org)

• **Safe Housing Partnerships**  
[safehousingpartnerships.org](http://safehousingpartnerships.org)

• **A Thousand Joys**  
[athousandjoys.org](http://athousandjoys.org)

• **Trauma Informed LA**  
[traumainformedla.org](http://traumainformedla.org)