



Columbia River Gorge

MARC Community

Columbia Gorge Health Council

Contact
Claire Ranit
Claire@GorgeHealthCouncil.org
541.968.4788

Network Description

Since 2011, a cross-organizational, cross-county group of leaders in the Columbia River Gorge Region have been working to develop a Trauma Informed Practices community. For many organizations this effort includes participation in quarterly trainings, recurrent learning collaboratives, and various engagement events. To date, nearly 1000 people within the region have been trained in concepts of trauma informed practice and resilience.

Organizations involved in the effort include social services, physical and behavioral health providers, early childhood education, K-12 school districts, law enforcement, youth justice services, county court systems, art educators, the faith community, and first responders.

Counties engaged in the Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities Grant include Hood River, Sherman, and Wasco in Oregon. There is also engagement from community members living across the river in Klickitat County, Washington.

Key Learnings

The MARC grant supported the Columbia River Gorge (Gorge) to continue down the path of creating a more resilient community allowing the network to strengthen and grow. During this time, key learnings surfaced to inform future efforts both within the Gorge and other communities.

The MARC grant provided funding to [hire a full-time Project Director](#) which is vital in the effort. This position is able to:

- Lead strategic planning
- Do focused outreach and relationship building
- Serve as a local expert

It is broadly believed within the community that if a dedicated position is not present to support the effort, that it will not be sustained.

However, it is important to note the Project Director role must serve as a leader and coach in such a way that the effort is [owned by the many champions from within the community](#).

While champions come from every level of organizations, it has been key in the success of the movement in the Gorge to [have the highest level leader from lead organizations at the table as decision makers guiding the overall community effort](#).

As a result of the variety of individuals engaged in and championing the work from different levels of community organizations, it is important to [build intentional opportunities for shared power](#). Consider

- In-person listening sessions
- Online polls
- 1:1 appreciative inquiry interviews
- Focused workshops

There must also be [opportunities for social learning](#). Make space for people from different sectors to come together to collaborate, learn, problem solve, create, and share on successes, challenges, and plans.

[Open communication is also key](#). Look for ways to support knowledge saturation in the community through consistent messaging.

Create opportunities for [each person to have their own “aha” moment](#).

- Learn about NEAR sciences and trauma informed practices
- Choose to engage in the effort
- Have choice for how they engage.

Finally, [have grace for yourself and others](#) – it is a marathon, not a sprint. Sometimes things will go well and other times they won't – this is all part of social learning.

MARC Objectives

The overarching goal for the trauma informed practices and resilience movement in the Columbia River Gorge is to create a more resilient community by spreading knowledge on NEAR sciences while supporting organizations and community members to integrate trauma informed practices in their lives and work.

Within the MARC grant, the main objectives were to:

- Strengthen and maintain the existing network
- Build trauma informed organizations and workforce
- Establish a framework for trauma informed practices within the community

The objectives were met through an array of network engaging activities including but not limited to:

- Trainings & Learning Collaboratives
- Coaching and technical assistance support
- Listening Sessions
- Trauma & Resiliency Summit, October 2016
- Website creation and management
- Newsletters, Trauma Informed Practices posters, and blogs
- Informational presentations to governance and service groups
- Educational presentations for the Oregon State Legislature
- 1:1 relationship building meetings
- Hiring of a Project Director
- Partnership with Westat to create the Organization Trauma Informed Practices (O-TIPs) assessment

Tamanawas Falls, Hood River County, OR



Sherman County, OR



Mount Hood, Hood River County, OR



Rowena Crest Lookout, Wasco County, OR



Stories of Change in Action

Upstream Interventions: Bringing Trauma Informed Practices to the Justice System

Sherman County Sheriff Brad Lohrey has worked in law enforcement for 26 years. Lohrey's father was also Sherman County's sheriff. As Brad puts it, "Law enforcement...is not a job. It's just my way of life. It's my family's way of life. That's what we do."

Despite this multi-generational family legacy, Brad reflected "I think the way we do it now is wrong because we just arrest people because we have nothing else in our toolbox to fix the problem."

Shortly after first learning about Trauma Informed Practices, Brad put what he learned into practice. Brad says, "Because of that Trauma and Resiliency Summit that I went to...I sit down with this guy and I interviewed him before he got an attorney and I said, 'Tell me about yourself and why is it that you're in jail today. What's going on with you?' It turns out that he was a veteran" struggling with mental wellbeing. Brad connected the man to receive services for veterans and mental health support, and gave him 30 days to use the services before deciding whether or not to charge him. Brad recounts that about a month later, "[The man] came back with his wife and his wife said, 'I've never seen him this good. He has been doing all of his counseling.' She said, 'I wish you had arrested him ten years ago.'"

Power in Community: Bringing Trauma Informed Practices to a Community Health Center

Kim Thomson works as Behavioral Health Consultants at One Community Health (OCH), the regions Federally Qualified Health Center serving a vast majority of the areas low-income, low-socioeconomic population, and patient's with high needs. Through trainings made available by the MARC Grant, Kim and her colleagues at OCH have been able to attend trauma informed practices trainings alongside employees from other community service organizations.

Kim shared how the trainings taught her how to change her perspective when working with patients. "It's such a shift to go from 'What's wrong with you?' to 'What's happened to you?'" she says.

The trainings have also helped OCH staff become better able to manage personal and vicarious trauma. Kim explains that OCH is very focused on patient care. This translates into a phenomenal resource for the community but it also challenges the providers because working closely with traumatized populations can lead to vicarious traumatization. Kim emphasized that this understanding of vicarious trauma has hugely benefited herself and her colleagues at OCH.

A Commitment to Community: A Trauma Informed Approach in Early Childhood Education

Mid-Columbia Children's Council (MCCC) is the Head Start & Early Head Start provider serving five rural counties in the Columbia River Gorge region. Associate Director, Doreen Hotchkiss, shared that the organization "realized that we really wanted to have a shift in our staff culture because we knew that the end result would be better services to children and families."

Doreen explains that positive interaction and communication among staff members is crucial because, "How we are with each other is how we are with families, is how we are with children, is how families are with their children."

For more on "Stories of Change in Action" see "Evaluation of the Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) Grant: Resilience Network of the Gorge" report by ORPRN.