



Trauma-Informed Organisational Toolkit

The Trauma-Informed Organisational Toolkit provides practical guidance for legal assistance services on all aspects of trauma-informed, rights-based organisational design.

The prevalence of trauma amongst clients of the sector is uncontested, particularly at the point where they need legal assistance. A lawyer who can recognise and respond to trauma delivers an effective legal service, causes no further harm, and reduces the impact of vicarious trauma on themselves.

The *With You* Project found that, in addition to training frontline staff, legal services must embody trauma-informed and rights-based principles across all aspects of service design, organisational culture, leadership and management.

This is the first Australian Toolkit of its kind, tailored to the needs and practice of legal assistance services. The Toolkit is underpinned by an international literature review, a National Legal Aid survey of existing best practices, and innovative approaches observed through national consultations. The consultations of 534 clients and carers; lawyers, support staff and allied professionals; and other mental health professionals spanned almost all states and territories. The *With You* Project heard that trauma-informed, rights-based practice should be a core competency for all staff in the legal assistance sector.

From the legal assistance sector, for the sector

The Toolkit enables organisations to provide services that promote safety, dignity, and access to justice for people experiencing poor mental health, mental distress and/or suicidality. A trauma-informed, rights-based approach also reduce burnout and vicarious trauma for staff.

The Toolkit showcases best practice from approximately 40 legal services across the country, addressing:

1. Organisational readiness
2. Staff competency and trauma-informed supervision
3. Wrap-around, integrated practice and partnerships
4. Client and carer access, involvement and leadership
5. Organisational and systems change

The Toolkit responds to the diversity within the legal assistance sector, by providing guidance that can be adapted to different jurisdictions and practice areas as needed.

In 2024, *With You* will also offer trauma-informed, rights-based training to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services, Community Legal Centres, Family Violence Prevention Legal Services, and Legal Aid Commissions across Australia.

The project is funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and led by Legal Aid NSW, on behalf of National Legal Aid.