



## **SAMSN's Trauma-Informed Approach to Working with Male Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse**

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to outline the trauma-informed approach that underlies SAMSN's service provision.

### **Trauma-Informed Approach**

It is well documented that childhood sexual abuse (CSA) is widespread and has far-reaching traumatic impacts on the child's development and later life functioning, as well as a ripple effect on families, subsequent generations and the health of the community.<sup>i</sup>

Survivors & Mates Support Network (SAMSN) is a not-for-profit organisation that provides direct support to men who have experienced CSA through its group-work programs, co-advocacy and individual planned support.

SAMSN also engages with the community to promote a better understanding of the trauma of CSA through a trauma-informed approach. SAMSN does this by working with those supporting survivors, including families and friends, as well as providing training for professionals and services who work with male survivors of CSA.

### **SAMSN's key principles of a Trauma Informed Approach are:**

- To be aware that CSA is a severe form of childhood trauma
- To acknowledge the far-reaching and damaging impacts of CSA
- To respect the resilience and survival strategies used by male survivors of CSA both when the abuse was occurring and subsequently in their adult lives

- To promote belief in recovery from the effects of CSA
- To commit to the empowerment of male survivors by giving a voice to their experience, and for them to be heard and treated with dignity and respect
- To promote a whole of organization commitment to a trauma sensitive approach that includes an ongoing critique of SAMSN's own practices.

**Within the framework of a trauma informed approach, SAMSN will pursue trauma informed practices that include:**

- Attending to safety in all the organisation's activities
- Sensitivity to the gender, cultural and historical issues impacting on male survivors
- Not allowing cultural/racial background, sexual orientation, or disability to become barriers to participating in SAMSN activities
- Being aware of the range of effects sexual abuse has on all children while acknowledging the specific effects on males
- Acknowledging the lived experience of survivors and enabling their working together as peers
- Recognizing the importance of providing support and co-advocacy alongside male survivors in their dealings with other agencies and service providers
- Focussing on what has happened to survivors rather than "what is wrong with them"
- Acknowledging the effects and impacts of other forms of childhood abuse
- Providing information around issues such as:
  - the importance of understanding grooming in the sexual abuse of children and the subsequent effects this has on survivors
  - the ongoing and specific effects of shame in the lives of men who were sexually abused as children and the ways in which shame undermines recovery
  - the importance of acknowledging grief and loss in the lives of survivors

- the role of neuro-plasticity in enabling change and recovery from childhood abuse
- the effects CSA has on the ability of adult survivors to regulate their emotions
- non-judgementally acknowledging the presence of unhealthy coping strategies while promoting healthy coping strategies
- Endorsing the importance of support survivors gain from family, partners and others
- Being aware of issues around access and equity for men across the community especially for hard to reach groups and subsequent isolation
- Encouraging male survivors to engage with SAMSN and participate in SAMSN activities
- Providing male survivors and their supporters opportunities for growth and engagement
- Creating opportunities for feedback from service users and community and incorporation of changes as appropriate

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<sup>i</sup> Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse Final Report Vol 3, Impacts;  
Centre for Disease Control: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) 1995-present USA;  
Cashmore, J & Shackel, R ( 2013) The Long-term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse” CFCA Paper 11, 2013 AIFS