



# Trauma Informed Feedback Processes: Using the Six Principles of Trauma Informed Care

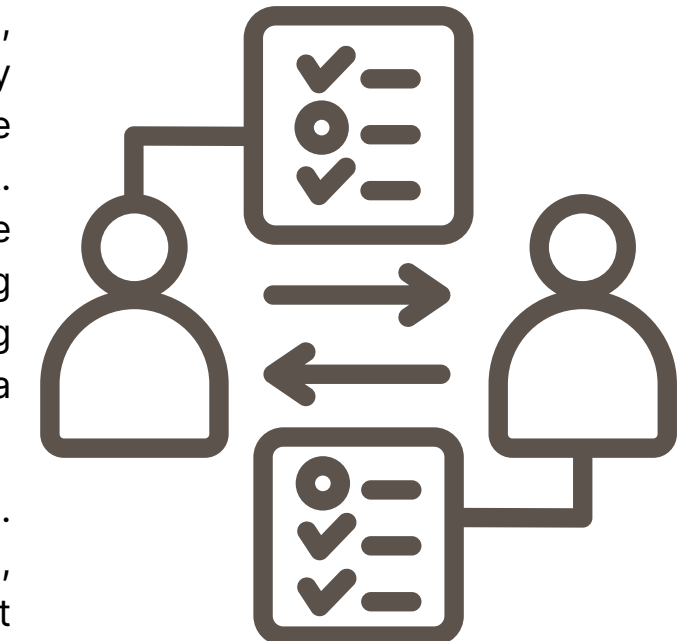


## Purpose

This document offers considerations around feedback processes for staff and service users. Feedback is important for any program, department, or organization. Constructive and cumulative feedback can help organizations refine their services to improve their efficacy and be better tailored to staff and service user needs. Feedback can also help employees and those served feel more confident in the organization if they feel their voice matters and input matters. Trauma Informed care recognizes that there can be risks to giving feedback. Giving feedback in unsafe processes can be a vulnerable experience and for survivors of trauma, an activating experience. People who have been exposed to trauma or toxic stress historically can have their experiences dismissed, devalued, or ignored which discourages providing feedback especially to those in higher power positions. Fear of retaliation or erasure of their experiences can result in loss of trust, feeling devalued, and disengagement. Trauma informed care can guide feedback processes to be safe, responsive, and empowering to create a healthy communication flow across the organization.

## Why

Adopting trauma informed practices in feedback processes can potentially improve staff and service user engagement in the process. Though incorporating TI into feedback processes can take time, constant attention, and possibly multiple shifts at an organizational level, ongoing internal assessment and quality improvement through accessible feedback processes can help with organizational development and create safe, healing workplace environments.



# Feedback Considerations

## Responding to Feedback

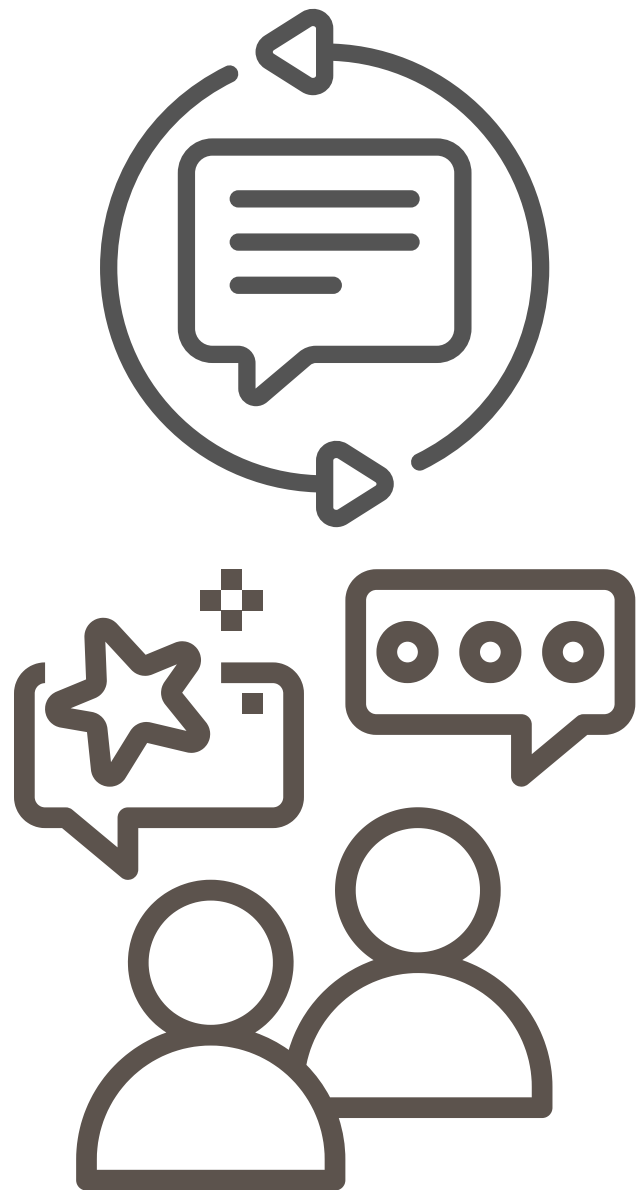
When asking for feedback, it is important to prepare to receive feedback. Negative feedback can produce shame and feelings of inadequacy. People who have survived trauma can struggle with high levels of shame. Feedback can cause a trauma response that can appear defensive or dismissive of feedback. We recommend creating an environment open to feedback by 1) determining why feedback is important and how it will be used, 2) creating a space to hear feedback through active listening and providing uninterrupted space for people to give feedback, 3) offering both receivers and listeners space to rest and digest information given and received. We suggest referencing the [Ladder of Citizen Participation](#) to reflect on how feedback is being incorporated into decision-making.

### Some Examples of TI Feedback Processes

- Multiple and diverse feedback options that are anonymous or identifying such as a comment box in a quiet area in the lobby, an open door policy, an online survey, an anonymous phone survey, and/or a grievance staff member. Diversify the time it takes to offer feedback (e.g., a 3 question survey with the option to add more if needed.)
- Public facing advertisements encouraging feedback and explaining what happens to feedback given
- Include an option for follow-up, how long it takes for follow-up to occur, and follow through
- Have an advisory committee with staff and service users whose feedback is regularly used to inform decisions

### Key questions when reviewing your feedback processes:

- Are there multiple ways staff and service users can provide feedback?
- Is feedback responded to in a timely manner?
- Is feedback reviewed regularly and responded to in a timely manner?
- Are staff and service users part of the cumulative feedback review?
- How do staff and service user feel their feedback is valued?
- Do staff and service users who provide feedback get a response that meets their needs?



## Safety

**The feedback processes offered ensure physical and emotional safety of the people we serve. Suggestions include:**

- Anonymous feedback options
- Easy to access, safe locations to provide feedback
- Staff able to assure no retaliation from providing feedback
- Feedback is common and welcomed

**The feedback processes offered ensure physical and emotional safety of the workforce. Suggestions include:**

- Anonymous feedback options
- Easy to access, safe locations to provide feedback
- Leadership able to assure no retaliation from providing feedback
- Feedback is common and welcomed

## Trust & Transparency

**The feedback processes are clear, consistent, and are respectful to those served. Suggestions include:**

- Person-centered language that is easy to understand
- Information includes what will happen to feedback (and is followed through) and any limitations to responding (e.g., delays)
- Those served who give feedback receive a response if requested
- Feedback is assumed to be true and investigated rather than dismissed.
- Those served feel confident that their feedback will be responded to appropriately.

**The feedback processes are clear, consistent, and are respectful to the workforce. Suggestions include:**

- Person-centered language that is easy to understand
- Information includes what will happen to feedback (and is followed through) and any limitations to responding (e.g., delays)
- Staff who give feedback receive a response if requested
- Feedback is assumed to be true and investigated rather than dismissed.
- Staff can safely decline to provide more feedback if further investigation is warranted
- Staff feel confident that their feedback will be responded to appropriately

## Peer Support

**The feedback processes includes lived experience when providing feedback.**

**Suggestions include:**

- Offering focus group or interview pairs as other ways to provide feedback
- Those served can provide feedback with someone with a similar experience
- Having the feedback process reviewed by service recipients

**The feedback processes includes lived experience from staff perspectives when designing feedback processes. Suggestions include:**

- Offering focus group or interview pairs as other ways to provide feedback
- Staff can reach out to other staff to communicate feedback
- Having the feedback process reviewed by workforce

## Collaboration & Mutuality

**The feedback processes include service users. Suggestions include:**

- Involving service users in the development of processes
- Involving services users in responses and structural changes from feedback
- Those served are confident that their feedback is valued and requested because they can see how feedback is incorporated into action

**The feedback processes include staff. Suggestions include:**

- Involving staff in the development of feedback processes
- Involving staff in educating others on how to provide feedback
- Involving staff in responses and structural changes from feedback
- Staff feel confident that their feedback is valued and is regularly requested because they can see how feedback is incorporated into action



## Voice & Choice

**The feedback processes prioritize empowerment, choice, and control.**

**Suggestions include:**

- It is clearly communicated what will happen to feedback provided.
- Service users feel validated in their experience when providing feedback.
- Those served are asked how they would like their feedback responded to.

**The feedback processes prioritize empowerment, choice, and control.**

**Suggestions include:**

- It is clearly communicated what will happen to feedback provided.
- Staff feel validated in their experience when providing feedback.
- Staff are asked how they would like their feedback responded to.
- Staff are offered opportunities to co-develop responses to feedback.

## Cultural Responsivity

**The feedback processes are culturally responsive and use inclusive language. Suggestions include:**

- Feedback processes are available in multiple languages and forms (e.g., written, verbal, video).
- Feedback processes are available at any time (e.g., immediately after, days later, etc.)
- Those served can request a staff or a peer to help them provide feedback
- Those served, especially underrepresented service users, feel the feedback processes align with their cultural norms and needs.

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- Staff can request a supervisor or a peer to help them provide feedback
- Staff, especially underrepresented staff, feel the feedback processes align with their cultural norms and needs.

The content in this TIP has been adapted from the following sources:

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Care Approach. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.



Access more resources like these at [TraumaInformedOregon.org](https://www.traumainformedoregon.org)