



Sanctuary Model Project Implementation

Project Background

Knowing that improving outcomes for children and families requires a multi-system approach, WMPC convened the Kent Coalition for Family Resilience (KCFR) to assess systemic barriers and to develop a strategy to promote resiliency. The KCFR identified the need for a unifying trauma-informed framework to help administrators in the child and family service system develop a shared understanding of trauma and integrate trauma-responsive policies and practices into their respective organizations.

Leveraging the collective impact of the KCFR, WMPC proposed to develop and implement a fully-integrated, culturally-appropriate, trauma-informed child and family service system in Kent County, utilizing the evidence-supported Sanctuary® Model. WMPC chose the Sanctuary® Model as it is designed to facilitate the development of structures, processes, and behaviors on the part of staff, clients, and the community that can counteract the biological, affective, cognitive, social and existential wounds suffered by the victims of traumatic experiences and extended exposure to adversity.

In April 2019, WMPC was awarded a grant from the Michigan Health Endowment Fund to implement the Sanctuary Model throughout the child welfare system in Kent County. Through a partnership with the Sanctuary Institute, the grant will allow for the following activities:

1. Conduct a needs assessment with the KCFR.
2. Conduct a five-day Sanctuary Leadership training for KCFR leadership and other selected staff to include capacity building through a Train the Trainer program.
3. Technical assistance around implementation for up to three years.
4. Certification of the Kent County Child Welfare system in the Sanctuary® Model.

Key Collaborative Partners

WMPC leads and empowers a collaborative consortium of five, nationally accredited human service agencies that have a long-standing history providing foster care and adoption services (Bethany Christian Services, Catholic Charities West Michigan, D.A. Blodgett-St. Johns, Samaritas, and Wellspring Lutheran Services). These agencies, along with the KCFR, offered their commitment in leading the culture and practice changes required at their respective agencies to become a fully-integrated trauma-informed system. The KCFR includes the Director of Child Welfare at Kent County MDHHS; the Presiding Judge of the Kent County Circuit Court's Family Division; the Child and Family Partnership Manager at Network 180; Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), and client beneficiaries.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Sanctuary Model?

The Sanctuary® Model is a blueprint for clinical and organizational change which, at its core, promotes safety and recovery from adversity through the active creation of a trauma-informed community. A recognition that trauma is



pervasive in the experience of human beings forms the basis for the Sanctuary Model's focus not only on the people who seek treatment, but equally on the people and systems who provide that treatment.

Creating Sanctuary in an organization is not a textbook or manualized protocol, but an organic process that happens over the course of time to move an organization toward creating a trauma-informed culture. A trauma-informed organization is one that recognizes the inherent vulnerability of all human beings to the effects of trauma and organizes system-wide interventions aimed at mitigating the negative effects of adversity and stress that are manifested in the clients served and the organization itself.

What is the proposed impact of the project?

WMPC proposes, with technical assistance, training, and guidance from the Sanctuary Institute, to:

- review and revise system-wide policies and practices to ensure they are trauma-informed, resiliency-focused, and culturally-responsive;
- improve screening, assessment, and trauma-informed service delivery for children in foster care and those pending adoption;
- train and equip the foster care workforce on trauma and resiliency and how to practically incorporate these theories in their work with clients; and
- enhance capacity of families of children in foster care to provide for their children's well-being.

WMPC feels confident that the project will improve child outcomes in the following domains:

- placement stability,
- timely permanency, and
- increased family reunifications.

What can I expect during the project implementation?

Becoming a trauma-informed system does not happen overnight—implementation of the Sanctuary Model is a three-year process. During year one, a group of agency and systems leaders will attend a five-day training on the Sanctuary Model (currently scheduled for the week of February 24, 2020, in Grand Rapids). Those leaders will then develop core teams within their own organizations and begin a process of training their own staff on the model, with technical assistance from WMPC and the Sanctuary Institute consultant. Training staff on the elements of the Sanctuary Model is the main goal of year one of implementation. Year two will focus on the review of policies and practices to ensure they are trauma-informed, resiliency-focused, and culturally responsive. Year three of implementation will focus on sustainability of the model.

What is a Core Team?

As noted above, agency and systems leaders will attend a five-day training on the Sanctuary Model, who will in turn develop core teams within their own organizations. The Core Team, made up of 4-6 people, will plan, implement, and oversee Sanctuary training within their own organizations. The Core Team does not simply repeat the five-day training with their internal staff. Instead, they are given 10 condensed 90-minute training modules to utilize with their staff in a timeframe that works for the agency.