

Piloting Signs of Safety: A Deaf-Accessible Toolkit for Trauma and Addiction

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The Deaf community - a minority group of 500,000 Americans who use American Sign Language (ASL) - experiences trauma and addiction at rates *double* to the general population. Yet, there are no evidence-based treatments that have been evaluated to treat trauma, addiction, or other behavioral health conditions among Deaf people.

Current evidence-based treatments fail to meet the needs of Deaf clients. One example is Seeking Safety, a well-validated therapy for people recovering from trauma and addiction. Seeking Safety includes a therapist guide and client handouts for 25 therapy sessions, each teaching clients a safe coping skill. When Seeking Safety was used with Deaf clients, unique barriers were revealed with regard to the client materials: they were presented in complex English instead of ASL, nor sensitive to Deaf people's culture, social norms, and history of oppression.

To address these barriers, Dr. Anderson assembled a team of Deaf and hearing researchers, clinicians, filmmakers, actors, artists, and Deaf people in recovery to develop *Signs of Safety*, a Deaf-accessible toolkit to be used with Seeking Safety. *Signs of Safety* is comprised of a therapist companion guide and population-specific client materials, including visual handouts and ASL teaching stories on digital video, which present key learning points via an "educational soap opera."

Dr. Anderson is currently leading a pilot study of *Signs of Safety*. Preliminary results show that participants are reporting symptom reduction from baseline to follow-up and high levels of satisfaction with the model, giving us the confidence to further pursue this line of research.

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