

# **2025 Pain Care Skills Training (PCST) & Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Combined Agenda**

## **Navigating Grief, Loss, and Adjustment to Chronic Pain: A Trauma-Informed Approach**

**Presented by: Dr. Jessica Richards**

**Offered: 13 August 2025, 1300–1600 PM ET**

**Location: Virtual**

**Course Description:** “Trauma” can be defined as “...an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being” (SAMHSA, 2014). Traumatic events can include, but are not limited to, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), combat exposure, interpersonal violence, serious accident/injury, and diagnosis of a chronic or life-threatening illness. Trauma, whether physical or psychosocial, has profound effects on health and increases the risk of developing chronic health conditions, including chronic pain. Once chronic illness develops, many people can experience waves of overwhelming emotions, including grief. Grief is a natural response to major life changes resulting in loss, and the loss of the healthy body's ability to function as it once did is one of the biggest losses one can experience. Trauma can complicate one's ability to effectively face loss and the complex emotions that come with it, which only complicates healthy adjustment and amplifies suffering further. As such, healthcare providers working with patients in chronic pain are uniquely situated to utilize a trauma-informed approach to developing patient-centered care plans to optimize pain management, while also supporting and empowering patients as they navigate the grief and adjustment process. This workshop will provide an overview of trauma-informed care (TIC) as a guiding framework to address the effects of trauma in healthcare settings and improve physical, as well as mental health outcomes. Participants will learn about the natural course of grief and adjustment following the development of chronic illness and identify signs that trauma may be disrupting this natural process. Additionally, participants will learn how to implement trauma-informed practices/procedures to resist re-traumatizing patients. Through patient vignettes and break-out group discussions, attendees will develop skills to facilitate healthy grieving and adjustment by creating a safe environment that fosters trust, support, patient empowerment, and continuous collaboration with patients as they work toward their pain management goals.

### **Learning Objectives:**

1. To define “trauma” and review common traumatic events that many patients with chronic pain may have experienced
2. To describe the nature of the relationship between trauma and chronic pain
3. To provide an overview of the natural course of grief processing and the ways in which trauma can complicate that natural process and serve as a barrier to healthy adjustment
4. To introduce TIC as a guiding framework to facilitate healthy grief processing and adjustment while also striving to optimize pain management and overall health/well-being

5. To define the four key assumptions and six key principles of TIC
6. To delineate practical trauma-informed practices/procedures that any healthcare provider can integrate into their existing practice to improve pain outcomes and maximize healthy emotional processing and adjustment to the losses that come with living with chronic illness

### **13 August 1300–1600 PM ET**

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| 1300–1330 | Overview of Trauma and Impact of Trauma on Health<br>I. Define “Trauma”<br>II. Introduce the “3 E’s” of Trauma: Events, Experience (of Events), Effects<br>III. Perform a Self-Assessment<br>IV. Discuss Relationship Between Trauma and Chronic Illness/Pain                             |
| 1330–1400 | Introduction to Grief<br>I. Review Adaptive Grief Processes that Facilitate Adjustment and Growth Following Major Losses (Including Losses that Come with Chronic Illness/Pain)<br>II. Identify Signs that Trauma may be Complicating Healthy Grief Processing/Adjustment to Chronic Pain |
| 1400–1450 | Introduction to TIC<br>I. Four Key Assumptions of TIC<br>II. Six Key Principles of TIC<br>III. Basic Do’s and Don’ts of Implementing Trauma-Informed Practices  |
| 1450–1500 | -----Break-----   |
| 1500–1530 | Implementation of TIC<br>I. Introduce Patient Vignettes and Key Questions<br>II. Break-Out Group Discussions  |
| 1530–1600 | Debrief Break-Out Sessions with the Larger Group, Q&A, and Wrap-Up  |