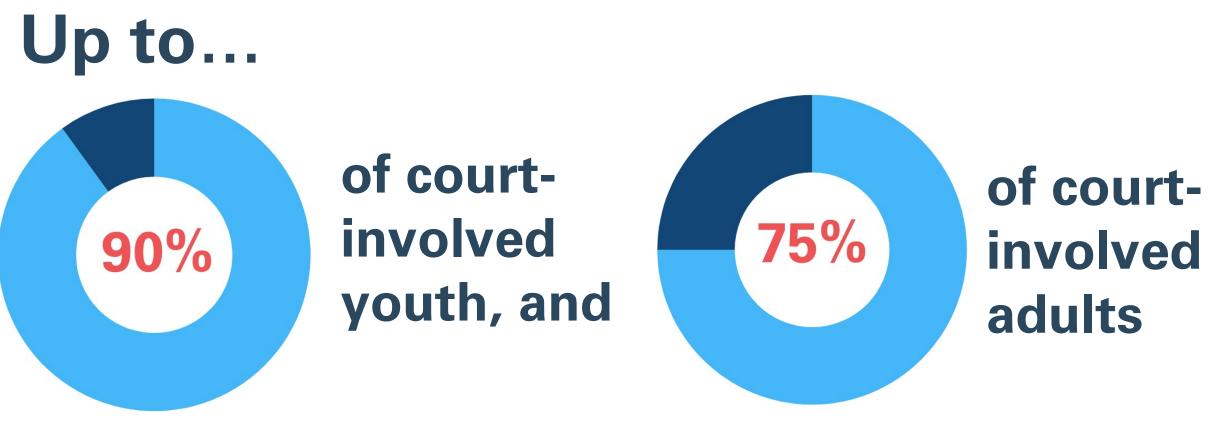


## **OUR STUDY**

Trauma is the lasting emotional response that can result from a distressing event.<sup>1</sup>



### have experienced trauma.<sup>2</sup>

Trauma-informed care (**TIC**) in the court context recognizes this reality and elevates safety and comfort through environment, policy, and behavior modifications, called trauma-informed practices (TIPs).<sup>3</sup>



This project is the **first** empirical assessment of trauma-informed care in the North Carolina court system.

## WHAT WE LEARNED

- Judicial education programs can begin to shift attitudes, showing promise for future trauma education efforts.
- Judges self-report and demonstrate highest engagement with TIPs related to communication, but less with practices that require broader collaboration and planning.
- Judges underutilize TIPs related to decision-making, interactions with youth and families, and understanding systemic causes of court-involvement.
- Future research and education could explore why these gaps exist and how to encourage judges to make far reaching TIC-aligned changes.
- More research is also needed to understand the impact of trauma-informed practices on courtinvolved youth and their families.

BASS





# Trauma-Informed Care in Court: An Exploratory Research Project

How do judges view traum
How do judges view traum informed care?

We surveyed 91 district court judges to better understand their experiences and attitudes related to TIC. We found:

- Juvenile justice (JJ) judges held more favorable attitudes towards TIC compared to non-JJ judges.
- Judges self-reported higher levels of engagement with TIPs related to **communication** and less engagement with practices related to policies/procedures and decisionmaking.

judges expressed

personal support for TIC

intention to understand underlying causes of behavior

flexibility in response to problem behavior

# How do judges respond to trauma education?

We surveyed 50 new judges before and after a trauma education program. Judges rated all sessions "very" or "extremely" effective on a 5-point Likert scale. We also assessed judge agreement before and after the session on common barriers to TIC:

### Judge Agreement With Common Barriers to TIC Pre- and Post-Training

Trauma is an excuse for poor behavior. Implementing TIPs diminishes my ability to hold people accountable.

Implementing TIPs to assist defendants is at odds with practices to assist victims.

Implementing TIPs is too time-consuming.

Implementing TIPs is too resource heavy.

I want to be more trauma-informed, but I don't know how to do that. I want to be more trauma-informed, but I'm concerned I'll do it wrong. I feel empowered to make changes that align with TIC



This research is part of a collaboration and ongoing partnership between Duke Law's Bolch Judicial Institute and the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts.

**Project Leads**: Eva McKinsey & Amelia Thorn Graduate Team: Ebani Dhawan, Emily Fung, Catherine Gorey, Jade Terry Undergraduate Team: Lauren Allen, Cassandra Ameen, Tess Bierly, Kaitlyn Hanson, Ana Herndon, Minjee Kim, Hanna Lavi, Anya Milberg, Sid Ravi Past Team Members: Nina Brockelman, Mary Aline Fertin, Raza Lamb, Samuel Lawrence

## We investigated four main questions:







How do judges act in juvenile court?

We observed 201 juvenile delinguency court hearings across 16 judges in seven counties. We scored judges' engagement with 30 TIPs across six categories:

Communication

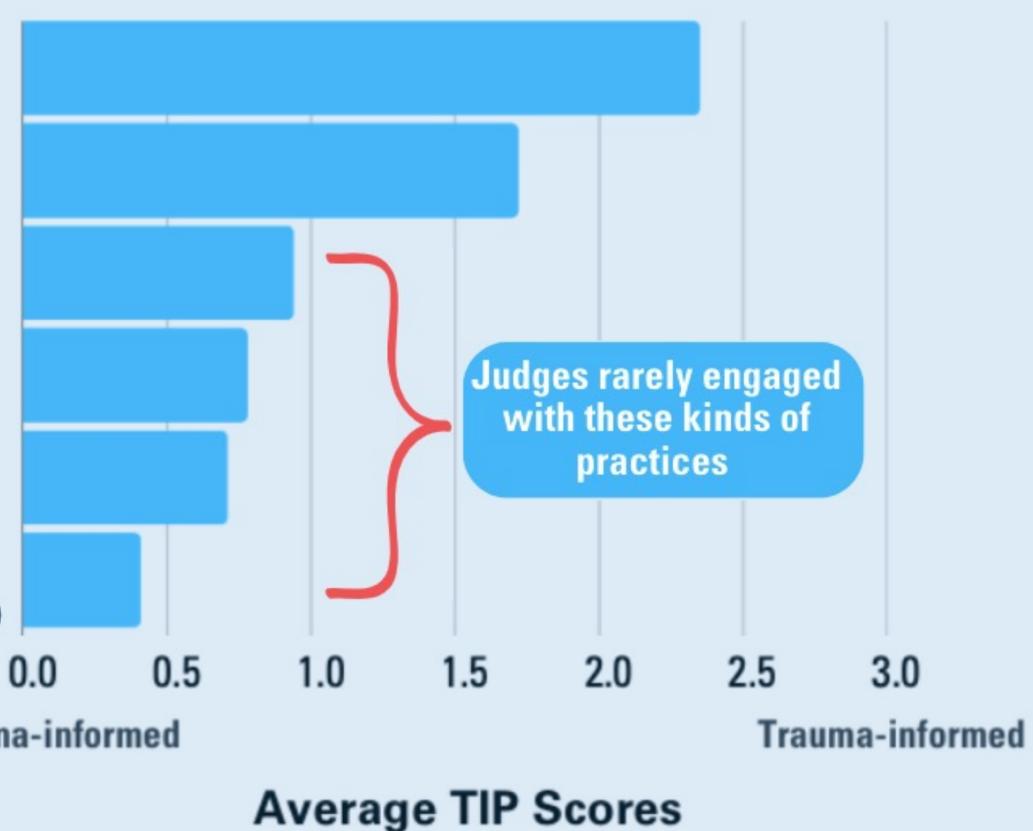
Understanding/Transparency

Juvenile Interaction

Decision-Making

Family Interaction

Bigger Picture (e.g., addressing root causes)



Not trauma-informed



We surveyed 17 youth, 25 juvenile defenders, and 29 juvenile court counselors in North Carolina about youths' court experience.

- Youth reported more than moderate distress during their court experience (M = 5.80).
- This was more distress than defenders (M = 4.78) and court counselors (M = 4.93) perceived the youth to have.

Court counselors and defenders also shared their views on judge behaviors that impact youth:

**Positive Impact** 

Strong

0–10 Distress

Thermometer

(1) Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA]. (2014, July). SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative Workgroup. (2) Dierkhising, C. B., Ko, S. J., Woods-Jaeger, B., Briggs, E. C., Lee, R., & Pynoos, R. S. (2013). Trauma histories among justiceinvolved youth: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. European Journal of Psychotraumatology, 4 (3) Branson, C. E., Baetz, C. L., Horwitz, S. M., & Hoagwood, K. E. (2017). Trauma-informed juvenile justice systems: A systematic review of definitions and core components. Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy, 9(6), 635-646 https://doi.org/10.1037/tra0000255 ; Fallot, R. & Harris, M. (2001). Trauma-Informed Approaches to Systems of Care. Trauma Psychology Newsletter, 6.





Judges' Mean Scores For TIP Categories

How do youth experience



