

# Trauma-Informed Practice for Title IX Coordinators and Investigators

Training Module

Presented by Camie Cooperman | Equity Compliance Solutions, LLC



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# About Equity Compliance Solutions (ECS)

## Staffing & Support

- ✓ Outsourced Roles
- ✓ External Title VI/IX
- ✓ Civil Rights Compliance Support



## Case Management and Adjudication

- ✓ Investigations
- ✓ Decision-Making
- ✓ Hearing Officer & Hearing Advisors
- ✓ Informal Resolutions



## Capacity Building

- ✓ Training & Development
- ✓ Policy & Procedures
- ✓ Consultative Expertise



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Today's Focus and Learning Objectives

The goals of today's course are to equip participants with practical tools to implement trauma-informed practices that strengthen fairness, protect due process, and enhance the defensibility of Title IX cases.

1

**Foundations (What)**  
Identify what trauma-informed practice *means* in a Title IX context

2

**Application (How)**  
Apply trauma-informed strategies during intake and interview

3

**Critical Skills**  
Differentiate trauma responses from credibility determinations

4

**Outcomes (Why)**  
Ensure fairness, equity, and due process for all parties



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Section I: Trauma-Informed Foundation

Grounding Principles for Fair and Equitable Practice



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# What Is Trauma?

*Trauma is an individual's unique emotional and physical response to a highly stressful or overwhelming experience.*

## Overview

Trauma may be acute, chronic, or complex

Trauma can affect emotional regulation, attention, and communication



## Details

**Acute:** A single, time-limited event

**Chronic:** Repeated or prolonged exposure

**Complex:** Multiple traumatic events affecting current functioning

**Emotional Regulation:** Hyper reactivity, withdrawing, difficulty calming down

**Attention:** Hard to focus, overly alert

**Communication:** Fight, flight, or freeze

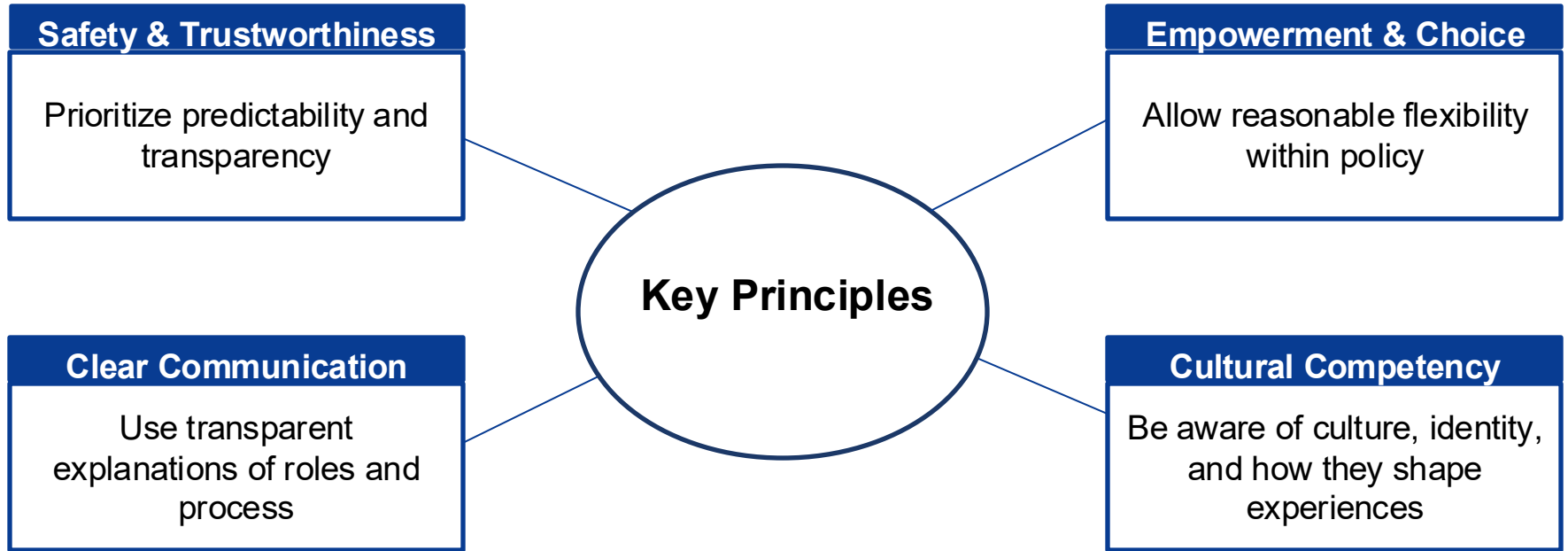


Equity Compliance Solutions

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Trauma-Informed Practice

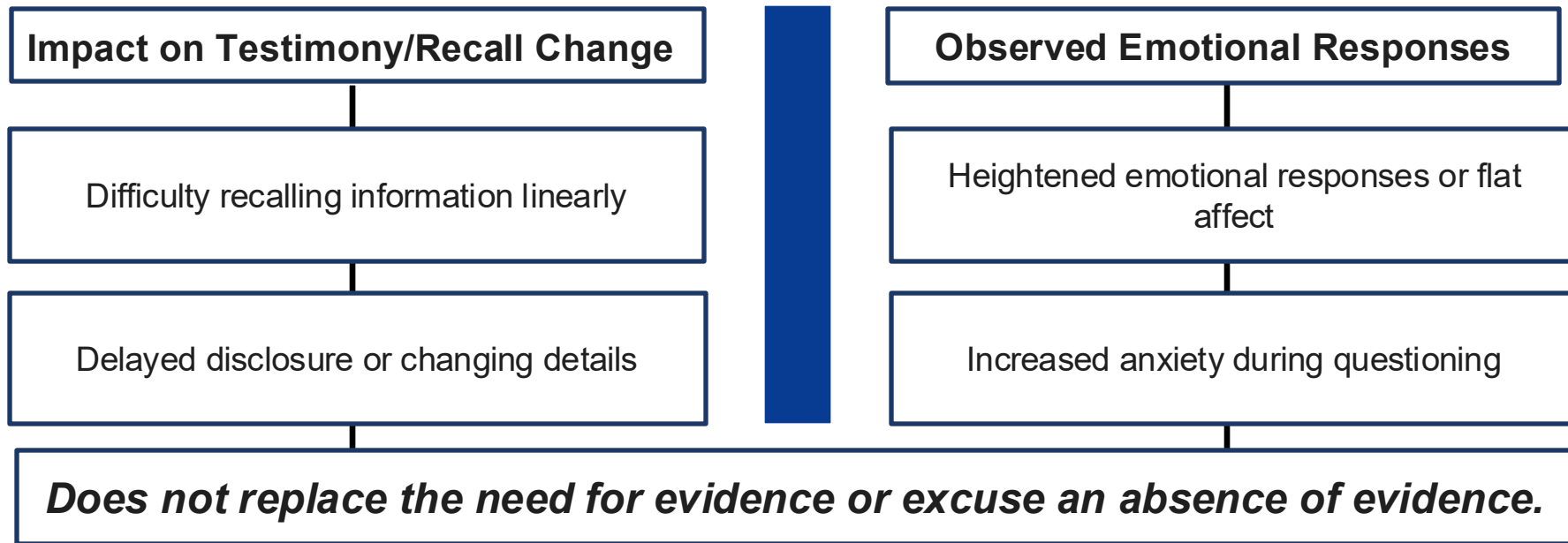
---



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# How Trauma Can Affect Participation



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Section II: The Three Pillars of Application

Intake, Interviews, and Evidence Review



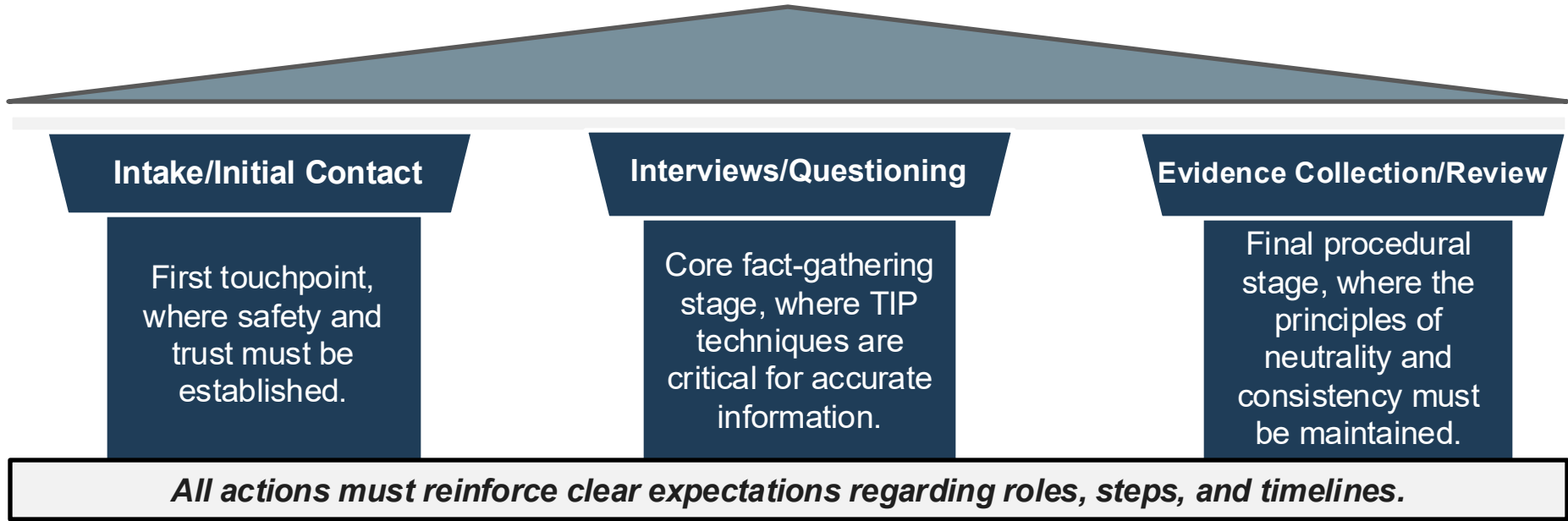
**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Three Pillars of Trauma-Informed Practice

---

---



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY



# Pillar I: Trauma-Informed Intake Meetings



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Be Mindful of Your Role and Power Dynamics

Trauma-informed practice requires awareness of how our authority may shape participation, even when we intend to remain neutral.



Be aware of your **authority or position** and how it may influence the interviewee



Offer **choice, pacing, and control** to help balance the power dynamic



Recognize that participants may come in **anxious, nervous, or hypervigilant**



Be cautious of your **body language and presentation**



## Equity Compliance Solutions

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Trauma-Informed Intake Meetings

---

## Neutrality & Process

Clear explanation of role and process

Neutral, open-ended information gathering

Avoid validation of conclusions or outcomes

## Safety & Pacing

Establish a physically and emotionally safe setting

Respect their autonomy

Use pauses to support emotional regulation, and normalize stress



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Student-to-Student

## **Scenario:**

A first-year student schedules an intake meeting to discuss concerns involving a resident assistant (RA) in their residence hall.

### ***During the meeting, the student:***

- Appears anxious and hesitant to share details
- Struggles to provide a clear timeline of events
- Expresses fear of retaliation or being identified in the residence hall
- States they are unsure whether they want to “get the RA in trouble”
- Asks whether the RA will find out about the meeting

The student lives on campus and is in their first semester at the institution.  
The RA is an upper-class student in the same residence hall.



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

What trauma-informed intake language could a coordinator use in this scenario?

**Question:**

*How can you start the intake and explain the process?*



**Example:**

*"Your participation is voluntary, and you have full control over your next steps. I am here to explain your options so you can decide what feels right for you."*

**- Empowerment and Choice**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

---

---

## **Question:**

*How can you use a trauma-informed approach when requesting complaint details during intake?*



## **Example:**

*"I understand this is difficult to discuss, and it's okay if your memory is unclear or you don't share things in a linear order. Please take your time and feel free to pause or request a break at any point. Can you tell me, in your own words, what happened?"*

*- Pacing and Permission*



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

## **Question:**

How can the coordinator acknowledge the RA's role and potential power dynamic while remaining neutral and not assuming misconduct?



## **Example:**

*"I want to acknowledge that the other student holds an RA role. I'm noting this for context so I can better understand your experience. This does not mean any assumptions are being made, and their role does not influence how this process or outcome is determined."*

- **Build trust, reinforce predictability, and maintain the neutral process.**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

## **Question:**

How can confidentiality and reporting obligations be explained clearly?

## **Example:**

- *"I want to be transparent with you about how your information will be shared. I'll keep what you tell me as private as possible, but I need to explain the limits of confidentiality right now so there are no surprises."*
- *[Explain confidentiality and reporting obligations under your policy]*
- *"If I am required to share information, I will explain what that means, why it's necessary, and what information will be shared."*
- **Trustworthiness and Transparency**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

## **Question:**

What can you say to address retaliation concerns supportively, without offering guarantees?

## **Example:**

*“We ask all parties and witnesses to keep information related to this process confidential. The college strictly prohibits retaliation against anyone participating in this process, and those concerns are taken seriously. While I cannot control what others may say or do, if you experience or observe retaliation, please report it to me immediately so it can be addressed.”*

- **Reinforce the institution’s commitment to safety.**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Intake Considerations

---

## ***Question:***

What trauma-informed explanation will encourage informed participation without guiding a student toward formal or informal resolution?



## ***Example:***

*"You don't need to decide anything today. I can walk you through your options, and you can take the time to decide what feels right for you."*

- ***Empowerment, Voice, and Choice***



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY



# Pillar II: Trauma-Informed Interviews



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Interviews: Structure and Predictability

---

---

*The primary goal is to build rapport through safety and predictability.*

Explain interview  
purpose and  
format

Clarify roles and  
responsibilities of  
every participant

Normalize  
memory gaps  
and emotional  
responses

Offer breaks  
and control  
over pacing



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study Continuation: The Interview

---

---

## **Scenario:**

*A few weeks later, the student who has filed a formal Title IX complaint agrees to an investigative interview. The meeting is scheduled for 90 minutes in a neutral, private conference room. The investigator begins the interview.*



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Interview Considerations

## **Question:**

What can the investigator say to clearly establish the format and roles?

## **Example:**

*"Thank you for coming in. My role is to serve as a neutral fact-finder and gather information about your report and your perspective. I have set aside 90 minutes, but we can adjust that time as needed. We can take a break or stop the interview and continue at a different time. You are not required to answer any questions you are uncomfortable answering. If you do not understand a question, please ask for clarification. Do you have any questions before we begin?"*

- **Reinforce Safety and Predictability**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Trauma-Informed Questioning Techniques

## Language

**Emphasize choice and agency**

Neutral tone and language

Avoid jargon or complex sentences

**Validate feelings not facts**

Avoid escalating questioning

Use clear, simple language

## Approach

Use consistent questioning

**Do not use external evidence**

Open-ended before clarifying questions

**Validate Information**

**Avoid blame-inducing questions**

One question at a time



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Questioning Techniques

---

---

## ***Scenario:***

The student's account is non-linear; they mention a detail about a peer witness, then immediately jump back to a previous point in the timeline.

"...and I remember leaving my room, but then I also spoke to a peer, Maria, I hope she's okay, anyway, I went back to my room..."



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Trauma-Informed Questioning Considerations

---

## **Question:**

What is your approach as the investigator?  
What will you say?

## **Example:**

*"Thank you for sharing that. I want to make sure I accurately captured everything. You mentioned a peer named Maria. Can you tell me, in your own words, what you discussed with Maria? We can return to the timeline afterward."*

- ***Do not interrupt, but later gently probe the key information with open-ended questions and clear language. This validates the student's experience, offers choice and pacing, and allows the investigator to gather the requisite information.***



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Responding to Emotional Responses

Normalize the stress of the process

Pause interviews when necessary

Apply the same supportive approach to all parties

**Core Credibility Rule: *Do not interpret emotion as evidence of credibility or deception***



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Case Study: Memory and Normalizing Responses

---

## **Scenario:**

As the student starts recounting the event, they suddenly stop, become tearful, and apologize for their emotions. How can you respond?

## **Example:**

*Pause, offer tissues, and maintain a calm, neutral tone taking supportive action.*

*"It is completely normal to feel stress, anxiety, or powerful emotions when discussing a difficult event. Your emotional response is understandable and normal. Please take a moment. Would you prefer to sit in silence or take a break?"*

**- Safety, normalization, autonomy, emotional regulation support**



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Pillar III: Evidence Collection and Review



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Evidence Collection and Review

Ensure the investigative findings are procedurally sound, consistent, and defensible.

## **Consider context without speculation**

Look at the full picture (circumstances, the relationships, and the environment)

## **Evaluate consistency across sources**

Cross-reference all evidence ensuring consistent evidence across all sources.

## **Document**

The basis for all disputed and undisputed material facts



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Trauma and Credibility

---

**Credibility is assessed using the totality of evidence.**



Trauma may affect how and when information is shared



Avoid over-weighting demeanor or affect as an indicator of truthfulness



Apply the same analytical standards to all parties



Inconsistencies must be evaluated, not assumed as a result of trauma



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Final Remarks: Synthesis and Conclusion





**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE, EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Trauma-Informed Guidelines

---

<b>Does Not Mean</b> 	<b>Does Mean</b> 
<b>Replacing evidence evaluation</b>	<b>The investigator's duty to gather, review, and weigh evidence remains unchanged</b>
<b>Altering the standard of proof</b>	<b>We maintain the same standard required by policy, regardless of the emotional context</b>
<b>Biased application based on party status</b>	<b>The trauma-informed process must be applied consistently and neutrally, whether the person in front of you is a complainant, a respondent, or a witness</b>



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Practical Takeaways for Practitioners

---

1

*Trauma-informed practice strengthens process*

2

*Neutrality and empathy coexist*

3

*Structure improves information quality and prevents misinterpretation of trauma-related responses*

4

*Fair process supports defensible outcomes*

5

*Consistent application of trauma-informed practice is the foundation of equitable due-process for all parties*



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY

# Partner with ECS for Expert Title IX and Civil Rights Compliance Support

---

Contact us to discuss your Institution's Needs



Website: <https://www.equitycompliancesolutions.com/>

Email: [camie@equitycompliancesolutions.com](mailto:camie@equitycompliancesolutions.com)

*Happy to continue the conversation!*



**Equity Compliance Solutions**

NAVIGATING COMPLIANCE. EMPOWERING EQUITY