



Clinical Philosophy

Our Objective

Provide a **cohesive approach** for serving our clients. **Empower** clients by building upon their strengths, **encourage** a sense of independence and **instill hope** for the future.

Our Clients

The majority of our clients have experienced trauma during their lifetime. Trauma includes:

- *Abuse* – physical, sexual, and/or emotional
- *Neglect* – unmet physical and emotional needs
- *Violence* – as experienced or witnessed, which negatively impact the level of functioning
- *Separation and loss* – which are of particular importance to many clients

The nature, extent and impact of trauma are unique to each client we serve.

Our Common Beliefs

At UCAN we believe:

- and accept our clients' pain as reality
- in the resiliency and strength of our clients
- that the foundation for healing is through relationship building
- that in an attempt to heal, our clients often re-enact their traumas, attempting to change the outcomes

At UCAN, we understand:

- and support the difficult work of our employees
- the importance of a systemic approach
- treatment is not a linear process

Our Approach

Helping our clients explore and *define the systems* that influence their lives is critical. Systems include both immediate and extended family. Systems may also include, but are not limited to, race, gender, culture, religion and sexual orientation. Individual problems may reflect difficulties within a system. A *dysfunction* is a maladaptive behavior which originated as an attempt to resolve a problem, but became a problematic pattern instead. We believe that maladaptive behaviors should be viewed as strengths or survival mechanisms, as a way to manage the affects of trauma. Our systemic approach supports the origin of these strategies while providing clients with the opportunity to learn more adaptive strategies. It is also important to note that the impact of trauma may be expressed in many ways.

- **Development** – Inappropriate or insufficient human interactions with infants or young children can result in underdeveloped brain functioning. Abuse and neglect can have a



negative impact on the brain's ability to grow and change. In addition, trauma has an impact on the body's ability to regulate its internal systems; individuals are often in a state of higher arousal, as evidenced by an increased resting heart rate. Due to the immaturity of the central nervous system in children, they are more vulnerable to lasting effects of trauma. All developmental stages require the mastery of various cognitive, physical and emotional tasks. For example, clients may experience difficulty understanding and controlling their emotions. Recognizing which developmental stages were impacted by trauma is critical.

- **Attachment** – When trauma is experienced, primary attachments may be disrupted and in some cases severed. A significant number of our clients struggle with attachment issues that impede or impair their capacity to form healthy relationships.
- **Trauma** – Exposure to early and repetitive traumatic events significantly impacts how people think about and perceive their environment. The age of the individual when trauma occurs, the severity of the trauma, and the frequency of the trauma are all contributing factors in shaping the person's belief system.

Our Clinical Process

- **Assessment** – Assessment takes into consideration all aspects of the clients' lives and is critical to their future success.
- **Service Plan** – The service plan helps create a common understanding for addressing needs and to work toward particular goals. UCAN's service plans are strength-based, individualized, culturally sensitive and consistent with our philosophy
- **Services** – Services follow the agreed upon plan. UCAN takes a systems approach and involves the significant persons in a client's life, such as family members, school personnel, mentors, etc. in creating client supports. UCAN also identifies and links with additional resources, such as housing, health care, or other resources to ensure holistic needs are met.
- **Evaluation** – The evaluation process is continuous throughout the course of services; it is imperative that our goals are aligned with our clients' goals.
- **Termination** – Termination is the final stage of services. Termination planning assures that the client has the skills and the resources and is emotionally ready to move ahead. Plans for needs which emerge in the future are discussed and an After-care Plan can be created to prepare clients to address future needs.

Our Philosophy

UCAN's vision is that youth who have suffered trauma can become our future leaders, and this clinical philosophy is critical to our success. UCAN must ensure that all employees are well trained for successful implementation, for we are committed to providing seamless service and a full continuum of care for our clients.