

## Appendix A

Exhibit GG



F224

# A Trauma Informed Care Guide to Preparing for Trial to prevent Re- Traumatization: A Guide for Claimants

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### **Recommendations for Claimants to Reduce the Risk of Re-traumatization:**

#### **Crisis Intervention Services to be aware of for Claimants:**

1. Eden Dales Social Work (EDSW)

- EDSW is a community based social work practice, specializing in trauma
- EDSW is comprised of a group of registered social workers, who will be available to claimants over the course of the trial to offer crisis counselling, to address intense emotional experiences during the trial.
- Services can be offered by video or phone, and provided within 48 hours of your request.
- Requests for social work services should be directed to the main office, by email [info@edendales.com](mailto:info@edendales.com) or phone 416.398.1888
- Rate for services is \$200.00 per hour and services are covered by most extended health benefit plans

2. Public Mental Health and Crisis Resources:

- If crisis intervention is required, you are encouraged to proceed to the emergency department, call 911, or call the Toronto Distress Line, <https://www.dcoqt.com/> or 416 408-4357 or 408-HELP

- These are free resources and can be accessed immediately.

### **1. In Advance of the Trial:**

#### Communication with the Court:

- If comfortable, communicate trauma-related needs with the court, such as requesting when breaks are offered, or accommodations to manage emotional distress.
- Ask specific questions and ask to be informed when sensitive topics will be discussed, offering an opportunity to remove yourself if topics that have been triggering in the past will be addressed.

#### Trial Overview:

- Ask for a clear and simple overview of the trial process, including key stages, such as opening statements, examination of evidence, witness testimonies, and closing arguments.
- Gain as much information as possible about the schedule, agenda, plan
- Remember, any information you are excluded from hearing is a protective measure, decided upon by the judge, council, and court staff as a protective measure to prevent re-traumatization and support you.
- Ask to be notified prior to sensitive information being presented, offering a chance to take a break.
- Ask for a schedule to be notified when breaks are offered.

#### Pre-Trial Preparation:

- Take 5 -10 minutes to read about trauma, complex trauma and how trauma impacts functioning.
- Your knowledge and awareness of trauma will help you in your coping and managing your stress, or helping support others by understanding their experience.
- Resources about trauma, complex trauma, how to cope with distress, care for yourself, communicate empathy, and how to have a positive impact on yourself and others are all included below.

A Trauma Informed Guide to Reduce Risk of Re-Traumatization

- Be aware of potential triggers and develop personal coping strategies.
- Come prepared with a trial prep pack:
  - pen and paper (to note down thoughts, feelings, perceived inaccuracies, concerns)
  - large cold water
  - snack
  - something to hold/squeeze to maintain stress
  - cheat sheet of stress reducing activities: reminders such as this is not personal, this all part of the process, this is over soon, visualize cool air on face, muscle relaxation exercise -tighten and release each muscle group from head to toe (stress starts in the body, therefore healing must start with the body, not the mind), reminders of helpful tips

Establishing Boundaries and Setting Boundaries:

- Clearly identify personal boundaries for self-care and stick to them
- This will empower you to cope with the distressing trial process, and manage the long days and exhausting experience.
- Your emotional well-being is of the utmost priority and taking care of yourself will result in a healthy recovery from trauma.

Managing Exposure:

- Discuss with legal representatives about managing exposure to distressing details and images during the trial, when, where, how, why etc
- De-personalize this process (this is something that happened to you, and this process is what is required for the hopeful outcome, by removing yourself from distressing evidence discussions, you are taking an active role in your own healing and recovery)

Knowledge of Rights:

- Understand individual rights within the legal process and feel empowered to reach out to your council outside of the courtroom, with specific questions, thoughts, inaccuracies etc. This information will help with your coping.
- Keeping a pad and pen next to you is important to note down perceived inaccuracies, strong opinions, strong feelings, and thoughts so you can address

- them at the appropriate time with the appropriate person, to get your needs met for information.
- Find out how to have a daily successful debrief after each day in trial, with those who have a shared experience.
- This daily healing habit will have a positive impact on your overall recovery from trauma.

## 2. **During Trial**

### Successful breaks Taking:

- Connect with a trusted support person.
- meet physiological needs regardless of how you are feeling
- having something to eat
- having something cold to drink
- breathing fresh air (change environment, we cannot heal in the same room in which we became distressed)
- regulate and re-set nervous system
- see HALT model

### Documenting Triggers:

- have a pen and paper next to you during trial to write down thoughts, ideas, observations, inaccuracies, questions to be addressed and topics to debrief (thoughts, feelings, physical sensations)

### Awareness of Triggers:

- the better you can name your emotions and know your triggers, the better prepared you will be to endure this stressful proceeding.
- Identify and communicate potential triggers to legal and mental health professionals to minimize exposure during the trial.

### Your Role in the Process:

- Understanding your requirements for attendance and participation: Clarify your role during the trial, what is required of you, ahead of trial.

A Trauma Informed Guide to Reduce Risk of Re-Traumatization

- be clear on who is being called to provide evidence/offer opinions, and what will be presented.
- reducing the number of unpredictable stressors, by asking specific questions outside of the courtroom, will help immensely.

Nature of Evidence:

- Detailed Explanation: gain details about the type of evidence that will be presented, and when.
- Anticipating Challenges: think about potential challenging aspects of the evidence, planning to remove yourself periodically.
- This helps to mentally prepare for what you might encounter.

Trauma Triggers:

- Identification: Identify potential triggers related to the evidence, such as specific details, images, or testimonies.
- Think empathetically about what may be triggering and notify council ahead of trial and prior to discussing these topics during trial
- Coping Strategies: Discuss coping strategies with your support network to manage triggers, practice tools, including breathing exercises, grounding techniques, or requesting breaks during testimony.

Legal Terminology Review:

- If possible, ask for legal vocabulary so you are prepared for unfamiliar terminology.
- Refer to the Ontario Court Glossary of Terminology to familiarize yourselves with the language in the courtroom.
- <https://www.ontariocourts.ca/ocj/criminal-court/definitions-and-glossary/>
- Languages: Have a support person who speaks English and can help you understand the process in your own language
- Refer to Costi Agency for resources in a variety of languages-<https://www.costi.org/lb/languages.php>

Supportive Services:

**Exhibit GG**

Eden Dales Social Work

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

F229

A Trauma Informed Guide to Reduce Risk of Re-Traumatization

- Refer to the above listed information for urgent mental health support during and outside of the trial
- Obtain mental health support before crisis presents, to learn healthy coping tools
- Peer Support: connect with others who have a shared experience to share your experience, listen to theirs, offer support, obtain support, and collaborate on coping strategies.

Safety Measures:

- Come with a safety plan if panic presents (template in resources)
- Come prepared with a cheat sheet of coping tools (template below)

Have a trusted support person available by phone or physically present:

- Have someone available to you to check in with who understands your own experience.
- Educate your support person on tools to help you feel calm and regulated.

Continuous Communication:

- Maintain open lines of communication, keeping a list of thoughts, feelings, questions.
- Manage distress around perceived inaccuracies and know when to address these.

**3. Post-trial**

Post-Trial Support:

- Obtain ongoing mental health support after the trial, recognizing that the conclusion of legal proceedings may bring up new emotions.
- Obtain information about available resources for grief counseling, trauma counselling, and support groups.

**Exhibit GG**

Eden Dailes Social Work

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2023

F230

A Trauma Informed Guide to Reduce Risk of Re-Traumatization

- Debriefing Sessions: Encourage clients to debrief daily after trial, discuss their emotional experience that day, with those who have a shared experience, to obtain and offer support, and prepare them to cope with future trial dates.
- Continue to reach out to others who are struggling to cope with this trauma, and the distress of the trial. Helping others helps YOU immensely.
- Remember that every individual's response to trauma is unique, so be gentle with yourself and others.
- Team and individual support are crucial, and your experience may change with new challenges to be addressed.

Trauma-Informed Approach to Post-Trial Coping:

- Detailed Information: Obtain clear and detailed information about the post-trial process, potential challenges, and plan for addressing perceived inaccuracies and heightened emotions related to the experience of the trial
- Manage expectations for future actions.
- Plan for post-trial trauma processing therapy with a trusted mental health professional (to address emotional impact) before symptoms become unmanageable. Learning healthy ways to process grief and trauma is vital to healing and recovery.