



## Considering Brain Injury:

### Why being brain injury-informed is critical for person-centered planning

Summary of a webinar from August 12, 2019

#### The Big Picture

A traumatic brain injury (also called TBI) is caused by a bump, blow, or jolt to the head, or piercing head injury. In 2014, there were about 2.87 million emergencies, hospital visits, and deaths in the U.S. related to brain injury. There are three types of brain injury:

- **Mild** – About 80%, also called concussion
- **Moderate** – About 10-13%, might include passing out (losing consciousness) for a short time
- **Severe** – About 7-10%, might include losing consciousness for longer or coma

An acquired brain injury (also called ABI) can be caused by carbon monoxide (toxic gas) poisoning, drug overdose, or a heart attack that causes a lack of oxygen to the brain.

Everyone is at risk for a brain injury. This is especially true for children and older adults. It is important to use person-centered approaches with people with brain injuries.

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*Anastasia says, "Every brain is unique. If you've met one person with a brain injury, you've met one person with a brain injury."*

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There is no one "system" for brain injury. In the 1980s, advocates started pushing to get services for people with brain injury. But it can still be difficult for people to find support. States pay for services using state funds, trust funds, or home and community-based waivers. They also have agencies in different departments like Developmental Disabilities, Mental Health, Medicaid, or Vocational Rehabilitation.

Common issues due to brain injuries are:

- Memory
- Attention
- Organization
- Language
- Sleep disorders
- Vision
- Depression
- Coordination
- Anxiety
- Seizures

Some people might not know that they have a brain injury. It is a good idea to ask about a history of brain injury. These groups may be at higher risk for unrecognized (or unknown) brain injury:

- Athletes
- People who are in jail
- Victims of violence or abuse
- Veterans
- People who survived overdose
- People who are or have been houseless

## Personal Stories

Kelly was in a car accident with her two daughters when they were 3 and 5 years old. From the accident, her youngest daughter, Olivia, had a severe brain injury which caused vision loss, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anxiety, and memory, cognitive, and spatial issues. Kelly herself also had a mild brain injury due to the accident. She says it was hard to find services. It was hard to look for therapies for Olivia. Olivia enjoys music therapy. It has made a big difference in her recovery.

Anne was in a car accident in 1997 that caused a mild brain injury. Since then, she has found a path to recovery. Brain injury changed her life in a big way. She has difficulty with vision, language, balance, and sleep. She couldn't go back to work. She had to find people who could help her understand what was wrong. At one time, she had over 10 doctors. This is common in people with brain injury. She found a speech therapist who helped her find things that worked based on her background and interests.

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*Anne says, "While people can't always see the injury, they can see the recovery."*

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## Person-Centered

Support plans should be based on input from the person, along with others important in their lives. It might take longer to ask questions about what a person has been through, but it is helpful. Personal connections make sure that the help is what the person with brain injury wants and needs. Our brains grow and improve throughout our lives. As time goes on people with brain injury continue to recover.

You can watch the whole webinar and look at the slides on [the NCAPPS website](#).

The speakers on this webinar were:



**Anastasia Edmonston** MS CRC—Has worked with people with brain injury for over 30 years and now trains professionals on person-centered thinking and planning in brain injury and behavioral health supports.



**Kelly Lang** Advocate, Parent—Has advocated for people with brain injury, including herself and her daughter Olivia, for the past 17 years.



**Anne Forrest** PhD, Economist—Is an international advocate for people with brain injury who shares her message of recovery and accessible technology through her website, [A Plastic Brain | Awareness, Hope, Advocacy](#).