



**The Law
Foundation
of Ontario**

BIST
Brain Injury Society of Toronto

PRESENTED BY:
MELISSA VIGAR, KATIE MANIKAS AND ALEXANDER
MONKROB

THANKS TO
EVERYONE
WHO
CONTRIBUTED
TO THE ABI
JUSTICE
PROJECT

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Ontario Brain Injury Association (OBIA)

SPEAKERS: MELISSA VIGAR

- Melissa Vigar is the Executive Director of the Brain Injury Society. Melissa is a Registered Social Worker who has worked in the field of brain injury for almost twenty years, supporting individuals and families in both the non-profit and private sector.

SPEAKERS: KATIE MANIKAS

- *Katie Manikas* has served in non-profit ABI services for over 18 years, providing front line support and staff development to assist/advocate for families and individuals in both residential and community service settings. Katie is passionate about developing innovative programs and services to address poverty reduction and homelessness prevention for ABI services. Currently, Katie is a Private Consultant in partnership through **ACCESSolve** delivering program development/proposal writing to address service gaps for non-profit agencies across the province.

**SPEAKERS:
ALEXANDER
MONKROB**

- Was a Teacher 12+ Years
- Has 2 Degrees:
 - BA and B.ED 5 years University
 - Taught Elementary, Primary High School and University Level, Esl, Special Needs and Behavioral, And Reading Recovery

Life after Alexander's Accident

- Less Confident
- Unable to work full time
 - Brain Injury
 - Spinal Injury
- Mental Health Barriers
- Seizure Disorder
- Severe Anxiety Disorder
- Severe PTSD Trauma
- Overstimulation to Noise, Sounds, Crowds of People
 - Irritable
- Memory issues (short term)
 - Forgetful
 - Sad
 - Depressed
 - Suicidal
- Processing issues to information and comprehension



WHY ARE WE DOING THIS TRAINING?

- We know there are many people involved with the criminal justice system who have had a brain injury. Some of these people don't know they've had a brain injury.
- Clinicians, researchers and people with lived experience of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) recognize that Brain Injury and the Criminal Justice System is an important public health issue.
- Some do know they've had a brain injury but may not make the connection between their injury and some of the challenges they're experiencing.
- Brain Injury can be **invisible**: it might not be identified through screening or in any justice system documents.
- Brain Injury can affect all aspects of a person's involvement with the justice system and community reintegration.
- We know this can pose unique challenges for lawyers, caregivers and brain injury survivors. The aim of this training is to help.

TRAINING AIMS:



Discuss vulnerable populations that have an overrepresentation of persons with diagnosed or suspected brain injury



Introduce you to the Brain Injury Society of Toronto and the programs and resources they offer



Provide education on the intersection of brain injury and the criminal justice system



Review the [ABIJUSTICE.ORG](https://www.abijustice.org) website, it's features and how to access/utilize it



Provide practical strategies to support persons with ABI navigate the justice system



Learn practical support and sooth techniques from someone with lived experience, to increase participation and reduce stress during justice related (or every day) meetings/encounters

BRAIN INJURY SOCIETY OF TORONTO: WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT YOU AND YOUR CLIENTS WITH BRAIN INJURY



- BIST provides programs and services to people living with an acquired brain injury (ABI), their families and caregivers
- We are a charitable non-profit organization funded by donations, money raised by events, and sponsorship programs
- Our mission is to enhance the quality of life of people living in the City of Toronto with an ABI, through advocacy, awareness, education and support

PREVALENCE OF TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY: A GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM



- TBI is the number one cause of death and disability in Canadians under the age of 40.
- Over 500,000 Canadian sustain a TBI each year and incidence rates are rising.
- While the research states that men experience TBI twice as often as women..... BUT... this is not necessarily the true!
- Leading causes of TBI are falls (50% acute care admissions), MV crash (20%) Bicycle crashes and sport-related.

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH AND TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY



- While TBI occurs across all levels of sociodemographic status, evidence suggests a strong socio-economic gradient with individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds being at greater risk. (Colantonio et al., 2014; Hwang et al., 2008; Williams et al., 2006)
- We also know that the sequelae of TBI are most often superimposed on pre-existing language and literacy impairments as well as mental health, substance use and addictions challenges.

(Hughes et al., 2012; Snow et al., 2012; Snow et al., 2016).

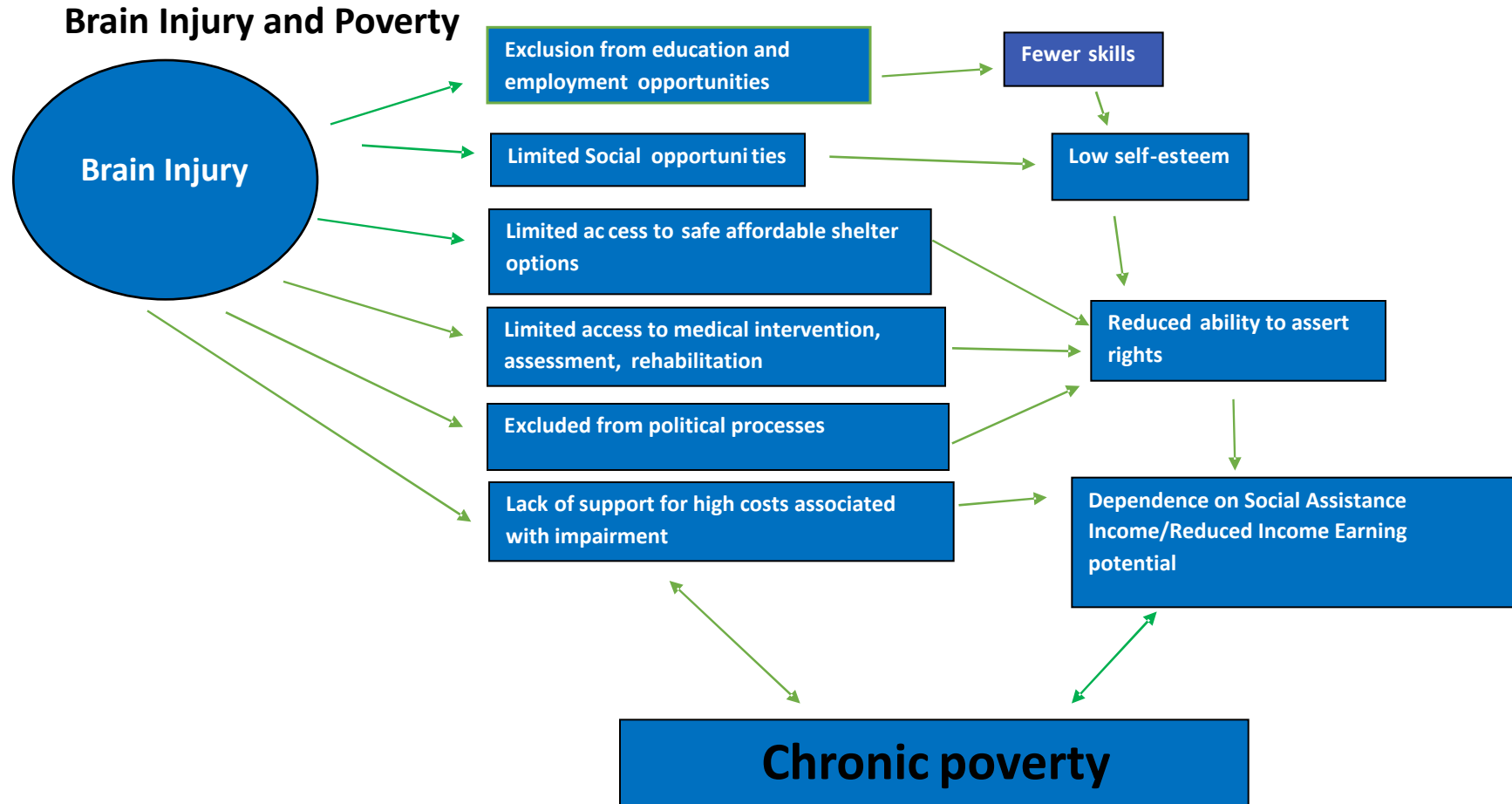


Chart adopted from The Vicious cycle of Poverty in Developing nations, reprinted from "Including Disability in Poverty Reduction Work, "Nothing about us, Without us," by R. Yeo and K. Moore, 2003 World Development, 31 (3), pp 572-573

WHERE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER INDIVIDUALS WITH BRAIN INJURIES... HIGHLY PREVALENT IN VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- A Toronto Study (from St Michael's Hospital) found that 58% of homeless men and 42% of homeless women in Toronto have a brain injury, and the average age of first brain injury was 17 years old. 87% of those injuries occurred before they became homeless.
- This population is at risk for experiencing seizures, mental health problems and poorer physical health.

WHERE YOU MIGHT ENCOUNTER INDIVIDUALS WITH BRAIN INJURIES... HIGHLY PREVALENT IN VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- Living with brain injury and being homeless harms a person's wellbeing, and as such this population is:
 - **5 times more likely** to have visited an emergency room in the past year
 - **Twice as likely** to have been arrested in the previous year
 - **Three times as likely** to have been victim of a physical assault in the past year

WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- There is an increasing awareness of traumatic brain injury among women survivors of intimate partner violence from repeated hits to the head, face, neck and attempted strangulation.
- This also includes women in the sex trade, many of whom are Indigenous.
- In a recent study of women in the sex trade, 95% had sustained head injuries, either by being hit in the head with objects and/or having their heads slammed into objects. 61% had sustained head injuries in prostitution.
- Abused and Brain Injured Toolkit <https://www.abitoolkit.ca/>



WOMEN SURVIVORS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE

- Many of these women (and those who identify as female) are unaware that they have sustained a TBI and have not gone to a hospital unless they were bleeding.
- Screening for TBI is crucial to the care of women survivors of IPV as well as women, trans women and men in the sex trade.



BRAIN INJURY: CRIMINAL JUSTICE POPULATIONS

- Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is highly prevalent among jail and prison inmates and those who have come into contact with the criminal justice system.
- As many as 80% of incarcerated adults have a reported history of TBI. (Williams et al., 2010; Schofield et al., 2006; McIsaac et al., 2016; Schofield et al., 2016)
- Approximately 50% of youth who have been charged with an offence have a documented history of TBI (Wszalek & Turkstra 2015, Snow et al 2011)
- Adverse early life experiences are common for persons with a history of TBI and incarceration particularly for criminalized women. (Colantonio et al., 2014)
- In Ontario, men and women who sustained a TBI were about 2.5 times more likely to be incarcerated than men and women who had not sustained a TBI. (McIsaac, Matheson et al., 2016)
- Recent findings indicate that people with TBI are more likely to incur a serious charge and less likely to achieve discretionary release.

FACTORS TO CONSIDER FOR CLIENTS WITH BRAIN INJURIES DURING THE LEGAL PROCESS:



TBI is associated with many cognitive, communication, emotional and behavioral challenges that complicate management prior to and during incarceration and create barriers to successful community reintegration.



Cognitive challenges include alterations in; attention, memory, multi-tasking, self-monitoring, planning and organizing, problems solving and reasoning.



Emotional challenges may include increased lability, or reduced affect and initiation, alexithymia, aggression, depression and anxiety are also prevalent.



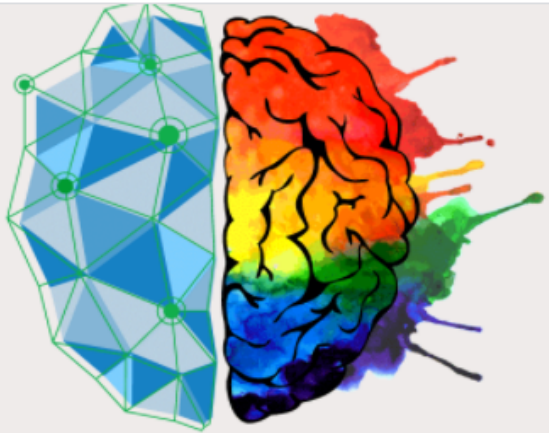
Cognitive-communication refers to difficulties with any aspect of communication; listening, understanding, speaking, reading, writing and thinking, due to underlying cognitive impairments. This also includes challenges with behavioral self regulation that impact social communication.

WE ARE GOING TO TOUR THE WEBSITE TOGETHER AND SHOW YOU HOW TO BEST USE IT

The BIST Legal Educational Awareness Project (LEAP) is working to develop, organize and deliver in person and web based resources and education sessions for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) involved in the criminal justice system.

An innovative concept that will utilize technology to enhance supportive legal services and programming for people with Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) in both the City of Toronto and across Ontario.

The program aims to incorporate technologies, web-based teaching tools and community outreach sessions into our legal system, enhancing the capacity for accessible services within the justice system.



BRAIN INJURY COMMUNITY

LEGAL COMMUNITY

PROJECT PARTNERS



WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?



Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation
Fondation ontarienne de neurotraumatologie



BIST has received funding from the Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation in partnership with **BIANBA** to create a program whereby we can provide YOU with support when navigating the justice system, including advocacy, problem solving and functional support



Email us at info@bist.ca or call us at 416-840-1485 if you would like to be on our mailing list to receive notice when this program is launched



Email us at info@bist.ca if you would like more information on or to be included in our database of Legal Professionals trained in the ABI justice toolkit



www.bist.ca

BIST
Brain Injury Society of Toronto



“People love to say, “Give a man a fish, and he’ll eat for a day. Teach a man to fish, and he’ll eat for a lifetime.” What they don’t say is, **“And it would be nice if you gave him a fishing rod.”** That’s the part of the analogy that’s missing.”

TREVOR NOAH

FOUNDER & CHAIR OF THE
TREVOR NOAH FOUNDATION