City College of San Francisco  
Trauma Prevention and Recovery Certificate  
Interdisciplinary Studies Department  

FAQ - Frequently Asked Questions

What do you mean by trauma?

The term “trauma” is commonly used to refer to both the physical response to injury – like burns or broken bones – and the psychological response. In the Trauma Prevention & Recovery Certificate, our emphasis is on the psychological and social responses to situations of extreme danger, violence or other threats that overwhelm the individuals’ normal coping mechanisms. Such situations can have lasting effects on a person’s feelings and thoughts and behaviors. The lasting effects are sometimes called traumatic stress. In our world today, traumatic stress is not an uncommon occurrence – many individuals, families and communities have been affected by war, murders, rapes, assaults, natural disasters, and other traumatic events.

How long does the certificate take?

Completion of the certificate requires 18 units of coursework which includes 5 required classes and 1 elective. The classes can be taken one at a time to accommodate a work schedule. But if a student prefers to take more classes at a time, the work can be completed in two semesters.

How much does it cost?

The cost for the certificate is $46.00 per unit (which is $138.00 per class). The total cost for the 6 classes (18 units) is $828.00. Please note that the following charges are assessed each semester the student attends classes: $17.00 student health fee (mandatory), $5.00 student activity fee (optional), $1.00 student representation fee (optional) and $3.00 Web4 fee (waived during Add/Drop period).

Does the program qualify for federal financial aid?

Yes, this Certificate of Achievement program has been approved by the State of California and is recognized for purposes of federal financial aid.

Are there any prerequisites?

There are no prerequisites for this certificate. One of the five required courses (HLTH 38) has a prerequisite. Taking any of the other 4 required courses would meet the prerequisite requirement for HLTH 38.
Do I need to apply? How?

There is no need to apply specifically to the Trauma Certificate program. You simply enroll at CCSF and begin registering for courses.

Registration for courses is easy. Simply navigate to the following website: http://www.ccsf.edu/NEW/. The following steps will allow you to complete your application:

- Click the “Apply Now” link in the middle of the page.
- Scroll down and click the “Credit Admission” link in the middle of the page.
- Click the “New Students” link in the middle of the page. (If you have registered for CCSF before, you can click on the “Readmit Students” link)
- Click the “Online Application” to request admission.

There is no need to take placement tests or complete matriculation if you are ONLY interested in the Trauma Certificate. However, if completing an Associate’s Degree or transferring to a four-year university is part of your plans, then we recommend completing the matriculation process as soon as you can.

After you enroll at the college – that is, once you hear back by e-mail that your application has been approved – you are ready to register for classes on (or after) your assigned registration date. If the class you want appears full online, attend the first day of class and ask for an add code, in case there is space in the class to add more students.

Are these units useful for an Associate’s Degree? Are they transferable to other colleges?

All of the classes count as credits toward completion of an Associate’s Degree. The classes also help you meet the G1 and H2 graduation requirements at CCSF. All of the classes are transferable to the California State Universities (CSU). In addition, IDST 47 is transferable to both CSU and University of California (UC) systems.

Why these classes? Why Trauma and the Arts?

The faculty who designed this certificate thought the core classes would all complement each other, not only elaborating on different aspects of trauma and recovery and different populations, but also offering different lenses on trauma. The IDST 47 course, Trauma and the Arts, shares stories through words, music, movement and visual art that, we hope, provide some insight into the diverse experiences of survivors. The CDEV 100 course, The Impact of Violence on Children and Their Families, focuses on early life experiences, and what those who work with children can do to help. The WOMN 54 course, Politics of Sexual Violence, gives a feminist and multicultural perspective on gender-based violence of all kinds. HLTH 48, Violence as a Public Health Issue, focuses on public health tools and practices for the prevention of violence, while HLTH 38, Trauma Response and Recovery, gives students practice with peer-based counseling skills and familiarity with a variety of routes to healing.
What careers does this certificate prepare you for?

This certificate prepares you to understand many dynamics of trauma and to work with people who are survivors of traumatic events, and to join in violence prevention efforts. A diversity of nonprofits and public agencies respond to trauma – you may find this preparation useful for working in the public health department or probation, for nonprofits that serve the homeless, or for organizations addressing family violence, to give just a few examples. Typical job titles are peer counselor, program coordinator, and case manager. Many people who want to work in the field of trauma continue their education to get a Bachelor’s or Master’s degree, in fields such as social work, public health, psychology, and counseling.

Do I have to have the certificate before I can get a job in this field?

Certificates related to trauma at the community college level are still new in this country, and you are not likely to see this certificate listed as a job requirement. Many jobs, though, do require some training, education and/or experience in the field of trauma – and this certificate could help meet those requirements. You may also find that this certificate is a useful add-on to another certificate (such as Drug & Alcohol Studies or Community Health Worker) or a Bachelor’s degree. More than half of the jobs in human services that we have identified in San Francisco do recommend or require a Bachelor’s degree, so continuing your education can broaden your job options.

I have been recently traumatized. How will I know if these classes would be too emotionally difficult for me?

Many people who take courses in this certificate are themselves survivors of traumatic events. In fact, many people who work in this field have a personal motivation related to their own life experiences, and this can enrich their work. We recommend that students assess for themselves if they feel ready to discuss in a classroom setting (which is quite different from a support group or therapeutic setting) topics related to violence and trauma. Questions you might ask yourself include, can I pay attention right now to how trauma affects others, as much as how it affects me? Would it be too distressing to spend several hours a week reading and writing about violence or trauma, or discussing it in class? Am I able to look at reactions to trauma that are different from my own, with compassion and understanding? What supports do I have in place, in case I find the course material to be difficult or triggering for me, emotionally?

It may be a good idea to first take the brief course, HLTH 90C: Trauma & Recovery, An Introduction, which meets for only 8 hours, to assess your own readiness for the certificate. Many students also recommend taking only one trauma course at a time, to not get overwhelmed with information and images that can be distressing.