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A Color Guild Member Exclusive Presentation

Design for Wellness - Trauma-Informed Design, Color, and Trends in the Built Environment to Promote Mental Health

AIA: CG-HEALTH-101 Session __ 1 HSW LU



Course Description:

Neuroarchitecture research increasingly confirms how all environments themselves can function as healthcare when they are designed using principles shown to support nervous-system regulation and psychological safety. Through real-world examples, case studies, and current trends in healthcare design, the course provides practical guidance for developing cohesive, neuro-informed color palettes and application strategies, with trauma-informed design principles and evidence-based color strategies applied across contemporary healthcare contexts to meet the distinct needs of diverse cohorts—from pediatrics to geriatrics—within a variety of healthcare settings including behavioral and mental health facilities, community health centers, hospitals, outpatient clinics, integrative wellness practices, and medical spas.. Participants gain tools to use color as a low-cost, high-impact design strategy for creating environments that actively promote cognitive ability, increase healing capacity, and support patients, families, clinicians, and care teams within the healthcare system.

Learning Objectives: Participants will

- Define trauma-informed design and explain how neuroarchitecture connects environmental conditions to nervous-system regulation and psychological safety in healthcare settings.
- Identify design cues—including color, contrast, lighting, and material coordination—that either increase stress or support emotional regulation in mental health facilities, community clinics, and wellness-oriented healthcare environments.
- Evaluate evidence-based color strategies that improve cognitive functioning, reduce anxiety, and support behavioral stability for diverse patient populations from pediatrics through geriatrics.
- Develop cohesive, neuro-informed color palettes appropriate for contemporary healthcare contexts, including behavioral health, outpatient care, community services, and integrative wellness settings.

To have this presented live (in-person or virtual) for your firm or group, reach out to Fawn Chang:

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HSW Justification

Healthcare environments themselves exert measurable influence on the outcomes of Health, Safety, and Welfare. By examining how healthcare environments influence nervous-system regulation, emotional stability, cognitive function, and behavioral response—factors that directly affect patient outcomes, staff performance, and overall safety in clinical and community care settings, this course reveals design strategies to more easily align all those in the environment with the optimal experience for the preferred outcomes. Research in neuroarchitecture, environmental psychology, and healthcare design demonstrates that visual conditions such as inappropriate color contrast, glare, poor lighting, visual clutter, and lack of spatial clarity can elevate stress responses, impair orientation, and increase anxiety and fatigue in vulnerable populations. These conditions are associated with reduced situational awareness, higher error rates, and decreased ability to cope with medical and psychological stressors. The course emphasizes trauma-informed design as a critical framework for mitigating these risks, teaching architects how to recognize environmental triggers and apply evidence-based color strategies that support emotional regulation, perceptual clarity, and psychological safety. Participants learn how color, lighting, and material coordination can be intentionally designed to reduce agitation, improve navigation, support recovery, and enhance staff focus and resilience in mental health facilities, community clinics, outpatient settings, and wellness-oriented healthcare environments. By providing practical methods for creating visually coherent, neurologically supportive environments, the course equips design professionals to reduce stress-related risk factors, support safe movement and decision-making, and improve the lived experience of patients, families, and care teams—directly advancing the health, safety, and welfare of building occupants.

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