



Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: Learning from Practice

Introduction

Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience (ACE|R): A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma is the first of its kind framework to advance an understanding of trauma at the community level and to work toward community resilience and prevention. The Framework advances the understanding that adverse community experiences contribute to trauma at the individual and community levels. Trauma manifests as symptoms within individuals and across communities, such as in disconnected social relations and networks. Supporting community healing and building community resilience fosters communities that can thrive, even in the context of future adversity, and creates the conditions for effective collective action by communities to find solutions to improve community wellbeing.

The Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework in action

Since the initial development of the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* in 2016, multiple networks and communities have shared it, as well as adopted, adapted and/or implemented it. Community interest has shaped refinements to the Framework and is bringing to light the challenges of addressing and preventing community trauma. In a series of community profiles, six communities reflect the Framework as part of their efforts to prevent violence, improve mental wellbeing, reduce opioid misuse, and/or improve housing conditions. They are:

Taking a Gendered Approach to Community Trauma in San Diego's East African Refugee Community. In City Heights in San Diego, CA, United Women of East Africa Support Team is addressing community trauma and building resilience in East African men and boys, using ACE|R as the organizing framework for their assessment, planning, and implementation efforts.

Building Community Power to Heal and Thrive:

Addressing Adverse Community Experiences. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department embraced the ACE|R Framework in its community-driven planning process to improve mental wellbeing for boys and men of color and LGBTQ youth, particularly in efforts that focus on healing as a starting point for collective action.

Cultivating Resilience to Address Adverse Community Experiences in an Accountable Community for

Health: The East San Jose PEACE Partnership. As one of eight communities in the California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative, the East San Jose Peace Partnership has used ACE|R as its overarching framework. This emphasis has helped the project to remain focused on community level change strategies and provided a structure for expanding its focus to address multiple forms of violence.

Milwaukee's Blueprint for Peace: Charting the Path Forward with the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework.

In November 2017, Milwaukee released its Blueprint for Peace. Grounded in the Framework, the Blueprint identifies forms of violence and structural violence and draws on community assets and best practices to focus on preventing violence, as well as intervention efforts to ameliorate the impacts of violence and prevent future perpetration and victimization.

Developing a Community-Trauma Informed Approach to the Substance Misuse Epidemic in Ohio.

Ohio's Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services is utilizing the Framework to drive its statewide opioid prevention efforts and strategy in partnership with 12 communities. They are specifically using ACE|R to build trauma-informed coalitions and identify drivers of substance misuse.

Fostering Social Connections and Trust in Public Housing: BRIDGE Housing's Approach to Addressing Community Trauma.

Bridge Housing has advanced the notion of Trauma Informed Community Building and improved outcomes for people living in public housing through implementing strategies to address and prevent community trauma.

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Learning from practice

As these and other communities act to address and prevent community trauma using the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework, they are sharing valuable lessons. Here are some of the things we have learned from their practice and that are reflected in the community profiles:

1. **Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience provides a framework for understanding and addressing complex problems.** The organization of the framework around elements in the community environment provides a concrete way of understanding challenges, as well as shaping actionable strategies for change.
2. **The Framework is actionable across issues and sectors.** ACE|R is being integrated with efforts to improve multiple health and community concerns (e.g., violence prevention, healthy eating/active living,

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mental health and wellbeing, climate change, and substance misuse). It is also being used by multiple sectors (e.g., public health, behavioral health, health care/practitioners, advocates, and philanthropy).

3. Healing is an important starting point supportive of further action. Healing is a starting point toward community agency, which is necessary for effective collective action to find solutions to improve community health. At the community level, healing may take different forms, including healing circles and vigils, and restorative justice practices and community dialogues that acknowledge transgressions and identify solutions for moving forward.

4. Solutions necessarily involve engaging sectors and systems that may have contributed to community trauma. Multiple sectors have an important role to play in implementing solutions to address and prevent trauma and support community resilience. In many cases, these may be the same sectors or systems that have contributed to the development of community trauma (see *What? Why? How? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework*). Further, the symptoms of community trauma may be evident in the people working within communities as well as in the systems serving communities. At times this plays out in ways that make systems and services less efficacious and/or not as supportive of change, and can affect community planning and improvement processes. Effective planning processes can uncover and address these tensions and land on solutions that reverse the production of trauma, while supporting community resilience.

5. Communities are implementing multiple strategies to address and prevent community trauma. They span 1) community healing; 2) strategies to improve social connections and trust, support participation and willingness to act for the common good, and support healthy norms and cultural identity; 3) strategies within the physical/built environment to reclaim space in a way that works for community members and reflects their culture, values, and priorities; 4) strategies to strengthen equitable economic and educational opportunities, such as workforce and economic development, and restorative justice in schools; and 5) strategies across systems to ensure that systems do not reinforce or create the conditions that contribute to community trauma and are contributing to healing and healthy solutions moving forward.

Authorship & Resources

ABOUT PREVENTION INSTITUTE

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and wellbeing by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has focused on community prevention, injury and violence prevention, health equity, healthy eating and active living, positive youth development, health system transformation, and mental health and wellbeing. For more information, visit www.preventioninstitute.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Prevention Institute's report, *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma*, provides a groundbreaking framework for understanding the relationship between community trauma and violence. Funded by Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit in Northern California, and based on interviews with practitioners in communities with high rates

of violence, the report outlines specific strategies to address and prevent community trauma – and foster resilience – using techniques from those living in affected areas. For additional information and resources on addressing community trauma, go to our [project page](#).

What? Why? How? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework builds off of core concepts in the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* and addresses questions that have emerged in early practice and implementation.

Minimizing the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences through a Focus on Adverse Community Experiences explains the relationship between adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adverse community experiences, making the case and providing emerging strategies to address community trauma and build community resilience.

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