

Executive Summary

The New Jersey ACEs Action Plan sets forth a path toward making New Jersey a trauma-informed/healing-centered state. In NJ, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) affect more than 40 percent of children across socioeconomic strata and can have lifelong implications for physical, social, and psychological health. Informed by community voices through focus groups and other convenings, and supported by state government and the philanthropic sectors, the NJ ACEs Action Plan calls for a coordinated, cross-sector, statewide response to prevent and mitigate the lasting effects of ACEs on children's health and well-being.

The NJ ACEs Action Plan synthesizes years of work examining best practices and research, listening to the voices of communities most directly impacted by ACEs, and convening partnerships among non-governmental organizations and state program leaders. Funded by the New Jersey ACEs Collaborative — created in 2018 as an alliance among the Burke Foundation, The Nicholson Foundation, the Turrell Fund, and the New Jersey Department of Children and Families (DCF) — the NJ ACEs Action Plan seeks to identify and implement promising strategies to address the negative effects of ACEs in New Jersey. In 2019, the Collaborative released [Adverse Childhood Experiences: Opportunities to Prevent, Protect Against, and Heal from the Effects of ACEs in New Jersey](#) (herein referred to as the NJ ACEs report). The NJ ACEs report details the challenges NJ faces in addressing ACEs and identifies five areas of opportunity, including: (1) supporting parents and caregivers; (2) training service professionals in trauma-informed/healing-centered care; (3) promoting community awareness; (4) advancing family supportive policies and practices; and (5) sharing data and research.

The NJ ACEs Action Plan, which builds upon the opportunities identified in the NJ ACEs report, offers a path toward the state's trauma-informed/healing-centered goal through five core strategies that aim to reduce — and ultimately prevent — ACEs in NJ:



CORE STRATEGY 1

Achieve Trauma-Informed and Healing-Centered State Designation

- NJ Office of Resilience (OOR) to establish the New Jersey Trauma-Informed Care Technical Assistance Center (NJ TIC TAC), to coordinate state efforts to prevent, treat, and heal from ACEs and inform state policies and budgets related to ACEs; and
- OOR to develop a Trauma-Informed Care Readiness assessment for non-governmental organizations and state agencies interested in earning a trauma-informed designation. The assessment will determine organizational readiness and staff knowledge about trauma-informed/healing-centered care and ACEs in order to determine required level of technical assistance.



CORE STRATEGY 2

Conduct an ACEs Public Awareness and Mobilization Campaign

- OOR to survey NJ residents to determine priority populations for strategic communications campaign; and
- OOR to maintain [NJ Resiliency Coalition](#) web space, a virtual learning community for ongoing stakeholder education and collaboration between trauma-informed/healing-centered organizations across the state.



CORE STRATEGY 3

Maintain Community-Driven Policy and Funding Priorities

- OOR to conduct a review of ACEs prevention and healing services throughout NJ's 21 counties and subsequently develop a needs assessment; and
- OOR to encourage public and private partners to increase the number and quality of trauma-informed/healing-centered programs available to individuals most impacted by ACEs.



CORE STRATEGY 4

Provide Cross-Sector ACEs Training

- In concert with organizations across the state providing ACEs training, OOR to offer evidence-based ACEs training programs for community members and a variety of child- and family-facing sectors to improve literacy in ACEs and understanding of the impact of trauma;
- OOR to prioritize ACEs training for community members, including resources for parents, community, educators, law enforcement officers, and primary health and mental health providers; and
- OOR to work with stakeholders and community members to identify the next most appropriate population(s) for ACEs training, building on existing statewide efforts and resources.



CORE STRATEGY 5

Promote Trauma-Informed/Healing-Centered Services and Supports

- NJ to promote use of a multi-generational, trauma-informed/healing-centered approach to prevent ACEs and foster resilience through early childhood, single-point of entry programs; and
- OOR to conduct surveys of nonprofit organizations, human services, and early childhood service providers regarding utilization of services; to oversee surveys to gauge the community's perception of and relationships with providers; and to measure outcomes through data sharing with DCF, the New Jersey Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, and managed care entities.



New Jersey is committed to becoming a trauma-informed/healing-centered state — a place where children and families can thrive regardless of who they are or where they live. Coordinated, complementary strategies are required to help prevent, protect against, and heal from the effects of ACEs. In the pages that follow, it will be explained how NJ arrived at these core strategies, what they mean, and how to get involved in helping to make NJ the best place to live and raise a child.