

## Healthy Blue builds on community relationships in PACEs Connection initiatives to improve the health and wellbeing of caregivers, children, and families in the foster care system.

**What:** Multi-county initiative in North Carolina funded by Healthy Blue involves resiliency initiatives in the PACEs Connection Cooperative of Communities in hopes of improving the health and wellbeing of foster children and families, as well as caregivers. A large part of this work will be to make available trainings about the science of positive and adverse childhood experiences (PACEs) and a skills-based stabilization program, the Community Resiliency Model (CRM)®, which helps users restore the natural balance of the central nervous system to better recognize, reduce and manage stress.

**Why:** Children in the foster care system often experience high levels of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), leading to increased likelihood of physical and mental health problems, risky behaviors, poor life and work outcomes and premature death. By offering caregivers, families, children, and the community at large tools to help people become aware of and track stress in their bodies, become grounded, identify and widen their “resilience zones” and more, we will wrap foster care children in a community that understands the “why” and help children use the tools to create and reinforce a sense of agency, having a common language, being safe, and belonging. We also plan to create community-led, culturally appropriate positive community experiences, which a John Hopkins Study on Positive Childhood Experiences has shown to be important to adult mental health.

**Who:** Program involves community mental health leaders, Department of Social Services staff, families

and children in the foster care system, as well as community organizations which come into contact with children and families. These include guardian ad litem workers, educators, faith leaders, law enforcement, mental health and health professionals, coaches, managers of recreation programs and social groups. Program is led by community resiliency initiative leaders, many of whom are already CRM teachers.

**How:** The program centers on making a set of six key resiliency skills from CRM trainings available to foster care workers, family members and children in hopes of reducing stress, increasing the ability to respond to stress from a regulated, or “learning brain” state as opposed to a stressed, or “flight-fight-freeze” state of mind. By using the internationally acclaimed (CRM) training – widely used in several of the program’s counties – participating caregivers, families, and children alike will have this common set of tools and language to help recognize and reduce stress. By “dovetailing” on existing opportunities to see workers, caregivers, families and children, program leaders can make the most of frequent and brief trainings, which should make attending trainings easier and more attractive. The program also strives to create memorable and community-led positive childhood and community experiences for children and families in foster care.

**When:** The program runs from December, 2021 through November, 2022.

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### Learn More About This Program

Contact one of our team members for more information.

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