



SANTA BARBARA COUNTY ACES CONNECTION

1. Project Description

SBC ACEs Connection is seeking support from Impact Lab 1.0 to form a cross-sector steering committee and a strategic framework for comprehensively engaging and educating individuals and organizations about the impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences and the importance of trauma-informed policies and practices. The ultimate goal is to create a trauma-informed and resiliency-focused Santa Barbara County and to improve outcomes for children, youth and families in the areas of health, education and safety.

Currently, there are ideas forming in multiple sectors about screening for ACEs and using ACEs science to change service delivery models. While there is a benefit to sector-specific indicators, interventions and data-tracking, we aim to avoid duplication, fragmentation and working in silos. We see this as a visible opportunity to promote collaboration, awareness and shared learning, and believe this approach will accelerate positive outcomes and enhance prevention efforts. Our objectives are to establish overarching goals and a shared vision to organize the work; to create avenues for communication that will allow us to track progress and leverage learning across sectors; and to define sector-specific roles within the countywide system to increase efficiencies and promote a truly integrated system of care.

The Backdrop: There has been a multi-year effort in Santa Barbara County to build awareness about the long-term effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the benefits of trauma-informed care. Based on a seminal research study done in the late 1990's, interest in ACEs science has spread across multiple service sectors within our county. Local efforts have included countywide screenings of the documentary film RESILIENCE, which has been seen by nearly 1500 people over the past two years; the Bridges to Resilience Conference, a one-day multi-sector conference that is in its 3rd year and has attracted over 300 attendees each year; and the Santa Barbara Resiliency Project (SBRP): a pilot that includes the Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics, CALM and UCSB. SBRP is a randomized control trial study that is screening children ages 0-3 for ACEs at well-child pediatric visits and linking families to appropriate resources and parenting support. Local momentum is currently at a peak following three events in April that featured one of the most prolific champions of the work, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris. The events, sponsored by UCSB Arts and Lectures, the Santa Barbara Resiliency Project and the KIDS Network, brought together community leaders, the general public and key stakeholders from health care, county government and social service organizations. Dr. Burke Harris is inspiring people to work collaboratively to change the way our current systems identify and address childhood adversity in order to improve individual and population health outcomes across the lifespan.

2. Community Engagement and Inclusion

Adverse Childhood Experiences have been linked to a variety of priority concerns within the social sector. They span all communities and are prevalent among service providers as well as consumers of services. ACEs science clearly shows that there is a dose-response relationship between unmitigated childhood adversities and poor health and behavioral health outcomes that reach into adulthood. The specific adversities included in the original study were child abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse or mental illness, parental divorce or separation, and having an incarcerated parent. In Santa Barbara County, ACEs conversations are also touching on poverty, crowded housing, immigration trauma, and food insecurity. Programs to address these concerns are prevalent within the social sector, and many of them are represented within the Leading from Within Network through members such as Barb Finch, Deborah Holmes, Lorraine Neenan, Saul Serrano, Niki Sandoval, Josefa Rios, Lori Goodman, Terri Allison, Nancy Tillie, Kim Davis, Patricia Madrigal, Ashley Costa, Ashleigh Erving, Alma Marquez, Gracie Huerta, and Pedro Paz.

Core Project partners were identified collaboratively by Ed McKinley, Jon Clark, Lois Mitchell and Barb Finch in preparation for the small convening of community leaders who met with Dr. Burke Harris before her lecture. Government partners include representatives of county departments of Public Health, Social Services, Behavioral Wellness, Probation and the District Attorney's Office. 3rd District Supervisor Joan Hartmann has also voiced her strong support for the project. Community-based partners include CALM, Community Action Commission, the Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians, Promotores, Isla Vista Youth Projects, Carpinteria Children's Project, Santa Ynez Valley People Helping People, Good Samaritan Shelters, Santa Barbara Unified School District, Student Mental Wellness Community Coalition, First 5 Santa Barbara, Family Service Agency, Court Appointed Special Advocates, Santa Barbara County Education Office / Welcome Every Baby, and Fighting Back Santa Maria Valley. In addition to Public Health, other healthcare partners include CenCal Health, Cottage Health, American Indian Health and Services, and the Santa Barbara Neighborhood Clinics. Philanthropy partners include the Bower Foundation, Priory Fund, and the Towbes Foundation. It is our hope that some of the powerful LFW leaders will become members of the SBC ACEs Connection Steering Committee, as this committee will collaboratively lead the effort. Barb Finch and Terri Allison have committed to take on leadership and organization of the Impact Lab 1.0 project if it is selected as one of the pilots.

In considering community engagement and inclusion, we are aware that different sectors are at various stages of readiness for implementing ACEs-informed ideas and practices. Our intention is to utilize the resources offered by Jane Stevens, founder of ACEs Connection, to help us develop resources, organize the work and engage partners. A small Steering Committee will be identified to create the strategic framework and move ideas that already have traction while leaving room for everyone to participate at some level. It will be important for this group to have countywide reach and to include representatives from key sectors (human services, education, health care, government, philanthropy). We envision smaller collaborative groups forming to move forward with sector-specific objectives once the framework is in place.

If it is successful, the project will create a framework for the SBC ACEs Connection that will benefit individuals, organizations and systems. Individuals will benefit from learning about trauma and ACEs, and will have access to simple self-care strategies that can improve their own health outcomes and those of people in their care. Organizations will have access to training and resources to educate staff, improve service delivery and shift policies and practices toward becoming trauma-informed and resiliency-focused organizations. Systems, such as intervention referrals will benefit from integrated approaches and shared learning opportunities.

3. Resources and Support Required

The work of organizing the Santa Barbara County ACEs Connection is already underway. Attendees of the small convening with Dr. Burke Harris have all endorsed three broad objectives:

- Support for the expansion of universal pediatric screening for ACEs
- Incorporation of ACEs training and trauma-informed practices at the organizational level
- Support for a steering committee to develop and implement a multi-year plan for Santa Barbara County to integrate ACEs approaches and track outcomes across sectors and organizations.

Those who participated in the small convening have been invited to attend the next KIDS Network meeting on June 6th to further discuss projects that are in progress, ideas for future priorities, and the formation of the Steering Committee. KIDS Network will continue to host the initiative and manage the web-based SBC ACEs Connection community group. (<http://www.acesconnection.com/g/santa-barbara-county-aces-connection>)

We ask the Impact Lab to help us with facilitation of the strategic planning process. This is a complex initiative with many different partners and potential partners. Getting to agreement about overarching goals and a shared vision for organizing the work can be challenging when partners do not have a history of working together and are more comfortable staying in their silos. Creating avenues for communication, tracking and shared learning will also require partners to reach agreements about tools and expectations and will require us to identify a champion or “connector” for each sector / project to take responsibility for these tasks. A skilled facilitator will help us reach agreements and create the framework necessary to put these processes in place.

4. Defining Success and Learning

We will be successful when...

- We attract a core group of ACEs Connection partners to the June 6th KIDS Network meeting to begin discussing the ACEs Connection vision and opportunities for moving forward. KIDS Network members and guests leave the meeting feeling energized and inspired about our collective work.

- A Santa Barbara County ACEs Connection Steering Committee is formed, with core members being powerful leaders from the Leading from Within Network who willingly bring “their gifts and the shared commitment, principles and consciousness of the LFW Network into a trust-based process without a predetermined destination.” Steering Committee members who are not from the LFW Network feel included and valued as equal partners and are integrated into the trust-based process.
- A skilled facilitator is secured and the Steering Committee agrees on a schedule and a plan for developing the strategic framework For SBC ACEs Connection (a multi-year plan for integrating ACEs approaches and tracking outcomes across multiple sectors). Members show up and bring their creativity and passion to the process.
- A first draft of the multi-year plan is developed and communicated to ACEs Connection stakeholders at the September 5th meeting of the KIDS Network with a plan for seeking additional input to inform the final draft
- A process is in place for organizations to become members of the Santa Barbara County ACEs Connection.
- ACEs Connectors are identified for each sector/project that is currently in progress and Connectors are posting on the Santa Barbara ACEs Connection community site to let others know how the work is progressing and what they are accomplishing.

Greater impact beyond the project...

- Tracking tools and guidelines are in place and member organizations are invited to complete their initial inventory of trauma-informed and resiliency-focused practices and current training needs.
- The ACEs Connection Community Tracker is used to map countywide progress toward becoming trauma-informed and resiliency –focused as training needs are met.
- Organizations are integrating new trauma-informed practices and learnings across sectors such that children and families are better served and continuous improvement feedback loops are in place.
- Sector-specific training tools are developed and available in the resource section of the SBC ACEs Connection site and organizations are able to access and utilize resources at their own pace. New members are welcomed at all times.
- Sector-specific indicators are identified, tracked and reported in each subsequent publication of the Children’s Scorecard. Evidence-based practices are identified and utilized to move the needle on key indicators.

- Across Santa Barbara County, fewer children suffer from untreated or unrecognized childhood trauma, our communities experience fewer social problems related to untreated ACEs, and social cost burdens are reduced accordingly.
- Successful outcomes are shared and celebrated, new partners are engaged, and new resources are identified and made available from money saved through prevention.

This project will contribute to our collective learning and help us refine Impact Lab 2.0 by sharing what worked and what was challenging, by talking about obstacles we faced and how we tried to problem solve. If we are able to engage multiple LFW leaders in this project, it will be an experiment in bringing LFW principles to bear on a project that includes other partners.