



News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NUMBER: 21-07
DATE: November 4, 2021

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CALIFORNIA SCREENS MORE THAN 500,000 CHILDREN AND ADULTS FOR ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

New partnership with University of California to advance ACEs Aware initiative

SACRAMENTO – The California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), in partnership with the Office of the California Surgeon General (CA-OSG), today announced that the [ACEs Aware initiative](#) has reached two key milestones less than two years after launching. To date, more than 20,500 California clinicians have been trained to screen for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), and more than 500,000 children and adults across the state have been screened for ACEs.

Research shows that 62 percent of Californians have experienced at least one ACE. Emerging data show that the COVID-19 pandemic is leading to significant increases in ACE exposure for the current generation of children and youth.

“ACEs Aware continues to serve as an integral part of California’s response to the COVID-19 public health emergency and social and political stressors,” said California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris. “ACEs Aware is giving providers the tools and resources they need to help Medi-Cal beneficiaries identify and address stress-related physical and mental health concerns that can occur due to prolonged activation of the biological stress response.”

Additionally, Governor Gavin Newsom signed into law Senate Bill 428, the [ACEs Equity Act](#), which will significantly expand coverage for ACE screenings by requiring all health insurance plan contracts that provide coverage for pediatric services and preventive care to include coverage for ACE screenings. This includes Knox-Keene-licensed managed care plan contracts and health insurance policies issued, amended, or renewed on or after January 1, 2022.

Building upon these successes, ACEs Aware is moving into a new organizational home within the University of California. The newly created UCLA/UCSF ACEs Aware Family Resilience Network (UCAAN) will leverage the substantial interdisciplinary resources of two public health sciences campuses – University of California, Los Angeles and University of California, San Francisco – to develop, promote, and sustain evidence-based methods to screen patients for ACEs and advance evidence-based treatments for toxic stress.

Reduce ACEs by Half in One Generation

Since December 2019, DHCS and CA-OSG have co-led this statewide effort to train clinical teams to screen children and adults for ACEs in primary care settings, and to treat the impacts of toxic stress with trauma-informed care and evidence-based interventions.

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The ACEs Aware initiative and its sister program, the California ACEs Learning and Quality Improvement Collaborative, represent a nation-leading investment in the health and well-being of the next generation of children and families.

“The programs were built on the consensus of scientific evidence demonstrating that early detection of ACEs and early intervention for toxic stress are effective at improving long-term health outcomes,” said Dr. Burke Harris, who established a bold goal of reducing ACEs and toxic stress in California by half in one generation.

The ACEs Aware initiative is providing financial and educational resources to providers in communities at greater risk for toxic stress to ensure that support is equitable. To date, ACEs Aware has awarded \$45 million in grants to community partnerships to educate clinicians and their teams about ACEs and toxic stress, and to provide funding to build, modernize, and augment trauma-informed networks of care.

“Community-based grant funding recognizes that reducing health disparities and inequities stemming from childhood adversity is possible by building trauma-informed networks of care across community sectors,” said Dr. Karen Mark, Medical Director of DHCS, “This investment will continue to support local communities in achieving their goals.”

ACEs Aware has hosted trainings and public webinars on a wide range of clinical topics featuring ACEs scientific experts that regularly draw upwards of 1,000 participants, including a series on the “Science of ACEs & Toxic Stress.” The initiative has also built a provider education and engagement campaign with the tagline, “Let’s Make our *State of CA* ACEs Aware.” A public service announcement for the campaign featuring Dr. Burke Harris has received more than 6.5 million views. The initiative also partnered with the [NumberStory.org](https://www.numberstory.org) campaign to develop educational materials for the general public on ACEs and toxic stress.

New Partnership to Expand ACEs Training and Education

The UCAAN team includes frontline primary care providers in the state’s Medi-Cal system, led by [Dr. Shannon Thyne](#), Co-Principal Investigator, and Professor of Pediatrics at the David Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA, and [Dr. Edward Machtiger](#), Co-Principal Investigator, and UCSF Professor of Medicine. Over the past two years, UCAAN leadership has integrated ACEs screening and treatment for toxic stress into busy clinical practices across Los Angeles and partnered with others across the state engaged in this work.

“Patients and their families, along with health care providers, have found this effort to be both possible and valuable,” said Dr. Thyne. “We now have the opportunity to fully realize the power of addressing ACEs and toxic stress.”

UCAAN will harness the clinical science, implementation science, and training framework of the university system and will partner with community-based organizations, health plans, and clinical practices as they join in these efforts. In collaboration with these stakeholders, UCAAN will lead the broad dissemination of this transformational health system’s innovation and more effectively support the wellness of children and families in California.