

# Increasing Access to ACE Screening and Treatment for Young Children in L.A. County

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The cumulative effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) result in some of the most harmful, persistent, and expensive health challenges in the U.S. Screening for ACEs and responding with community-defined practices and evidence-based interventions can significantly improve the health and well-being of individuals and families.

**Families** and **Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)** play crucial roles in addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in local communities. New First 5 LA briefs explore best practices around ACE screening, specific to the experiences of families and CBOs. In addition to highlighting the unique challenges both parties face in the ACE screening experience, the briefs offer actionable recommendations for providers, health care delivery systems, policymakers and other stakeholders committed to ensuring that young children are safe from abuse, neglect and other trauma.

### Considerations for Families

Engaging families in the identification and treatment of ACEs is a delicate task, made even more difficult by several factors that serve to discourage or prevent families from fully investing in the process.

- Complicated and confusing systems to navigate
- Psychological and emotional toll on families when screening for adversities
- Stigma associated with ACEs
- Linguistic and cultural barriers that hinder understanding and engagement
- Limited power sharing of providers with families in treatment decisions
- Informed consent and privacy policies that delay information sharing between providers



### Considerations for CBOs

CBOs have trusted relationships with families that make them crucial to the goal of increasing ACE screening and treatment among L.A. County's young children. However, these organizations face significant barriers in becoming part of a comprehensive network of care.

- Incompatible information and referral platforms with limited or no interoperability
- Misaligned organizational culture, values and language amongst different systems of care
- Insufficient staffing and funding resources
- Ineligibility for reimbursement for screening services



## Building a Family-Focused Network of Care

To meet the needs of families and CBOs, L.A. County must build a trauma-informed Network of Care (NOC) for ACE screening and treatment. Such a network must center on the needs and strengths of the family, have the capacity to grow and learn in order to meet the demand for ACE screenings, and have a foundation of support to ensure long-term sustainability.

Everyone plays a crucial role in building this network:



#### Providers

##### CARE

- Reduce potential harm to families by adopting a trauma-informed approach to screening and treating ACEs

##### INFORM

- Promote trust and improve health outcomes by being transparent with all aspects of screening and care

##### EMPOWER

- Share decision-making with families so that ACE screenings become a patient-centered process



#### Health Care Delivery Systems

##### CONNECT

- Foster relationships between health care providers, CBOs and families
- Develop and promote a shared language and understanding of ACEs

##### GROW

- Increase screening capacity by engaging non-medical organizations
- Recruit and train CHWs, promotoras, and other healthcare paraprofessionals to screen for ACEs

##### BUILD

- Create an accessible and interoperable referral infrastructure
- Establish a repository of information to address ACE screening questions and concerns



#### Policymakers

##### SUSTAIN

- Ensure healthcare paraprofessionals (e.g., CHWs, promotoras) and non-medical organizations are eligible for Medi-Cal reimbursement for their ACE screening-related services such as the dyadic behavioral health visits

## ABOUT THIS REPORT

Produced with the support of a grant received by First 5 LA, the American Academy of Pediatrics – California Chapter 2 and the Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health-UCLA Prevention Center of Excellence, from the California ACEs Aware initiative. This first-in-the-nation effort focuses on screening children and adults for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in primary care and treating the impacts of toxic stress with trauma-informed care. The bold goal of this initiative is to reduce ACEs and toxic stress by half in one generation. For more information, visit the ACEs Aware website at [www.acesaware.org](http://www.acesaware.org).

