

Trauma-Informed Care and Strategies

► Regulate the Stress Response

Trauma-informed care recognizes and responds to the signs, symptoms, and potential consequences of trauma to better support the health needs of patients who have experienced ACEs and toxic stress. Addressing stressors and increasing the total dose of buffering and protective factors such as safe, stable, and nurturing relationships and environments, are associated with decreased metabolic, immunologic, neuroendocrine, and inflammatory dysregulation. This can also lead to improved physical and psychological health.

“The impacts of ACEs and toxic stress are treatable. We can screen for ACEs, respond with evidence-based trauma-informed care, and significantly improve the health and well-being of individuals and families.”
– Dr. Nadine Burke Harris

More information, including clinical workflows and algorithms, are available on ACEsAware.org.

For more information and resources visit www.acesaware.org/heal/



► Steps for Providers to Participate in the ACEs Aware Initiative:

- 1 Get Trained at ACEsAware.org
- 2 Screen for ACEs, Assess Risk for Toxic Stress, Respond with Evidence-Based Interventions, and Implement Trauma-Informed Care
- 3 Receive Medi-Cal payment
- 4 Help Advance the Health Care System



ACEs Aware

Adverse Childhood Experiences represent a largely unrecognized public health crisis. ACEs Aware, part of Governor Newsom's California for All initiative, seeks to reduce ACEs and toxic stress by half in one generation. With your help, we can meet this bold goal.

Join the Movement

Become ACEs Aware

A partnership between the Office of the California Surgeon General and the Department of Health Care Services, ACEs Aware trains Medi-Cal providers to screen for ACEs and provide trauma-informed care; provides payments for ACE screening and offers resources and tools to understand and respond to toxic stress physiology.



The mission of ACEs Aware is more important than ever given the toxic stress being caused by the COVID-19 emergency, including disruptions in access to care and repeated or prolonged activation of people's stress response without the buffering protections of a caregiver and/or a safe environment.

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include abuse, neglect, and/or household dysfunction that occurs by age 18. The abuse can be physical, emotional, or sexual; and neglect can be physical or emotional. Household dysfunction can be parental incarceration, mental illness, substance use, parental separation or divorce, or intimate partner violence.

► What is the Toxic Stress Response?

Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of an overactive stress response due to ACEs, because their brains and bodies are still developing. Research shows that repeated or prolonged activation of a child's stress response due to adversities, without the buffering protections of trusted, nurturing caregivers and safe, stable environments, leads to long-term changes in: the structure and functioning of the developing brain; the metabolic, immune, and neuroendocrine responses; and even the way DNA is read and transcribed. This is known as the toxic stress response. These responses are influenced by a combination of cumulative adversity, buffering or protective factors, and predisposing vulnerability.



How do ACEs and Toxic Stress affect Health?

ACEs are strongly associated, in a dose-response fashion, with some of the most common and serious health conditions facing our society today, including at least nine of the 10 leading causes of death in the US. Examples of ACE-Associated Health Conditions include asthma, diabetes, depression, heart disease, and difficulties with learning and behavior.

► People with four or more ACEs are

37.5x

as likely to attempt suicide

11.2x

as likely to have Alzheimer's or dementia

3.1x

as likely to have chronic lower respiratory disease

2-2.3x

as likely to have a stroke, cancer, or heart disease

1.4x

as likely to have diabetes

For more information visit
www.acesaware.org/screen/