



## ABOUT CALIFORNIA'S ACES AWARE INITIATIVE

### California is Launching a Movement to Make Everyone ACEs Aware

California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, in partnership with the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS), has developed a first-in-the-nation statewide effort to screen for childhood trauma and treat the impacts of toxic stress. The bold goal of this initiative is to reduce Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and toxic stress by half in one generation and to launch a national movement to ensure everyone is ACEs Aware.

### ACEs and Toxic Stress

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic experiences people have by age 18 that were identified in the landmark Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente (KP) ACE Study conducted among more than 17,000 adult patients.
- ACEs relate to 10 categories of adversities in three domains: abuse, neglect, and/or household dysfunction.
- ACEs and toxic stress represent a public health crisis that has been, until recently, largely unrecognized by our state's health care system and society.
- According to the most recent California Department of Public Health data reporting from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS, 2017):
  - 62% of American adults in 23 states have experienced at least one of the eight ACEs tracked by the BRFSS, and 15% of adults in 23 states have experienced four or more.
  - In California, 63.5% of Californians have experienced at least one ACE and 17.6% have experienced four or more ACEs.
- ACEs cross ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and geographic lines. Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of an overactive stress response due to ACEs because their brains and bodies are still developing.
- A consensus of scientific research demonstrates that cumulative adversity, especially when experienced during critical and sensitive periods of development, is a root cause to some of the most harmful, persistent, and expensive health challenges facing our state and the nation, including 9 of the 10 leading causes of death in the United States.



## Why Trauma-Informed Care Works

- Trauma-informed care (TIC) recognizes and responds to the signs, symptoms, and risks of trauma to better support the health needs of patients who have experienced ACEs and toxic stress. Research shows that early detection, early intervention, and TIC can improve health outcomes.
- Treatments for improving outcomes for individuals who have experienced ACEs may include strategies to regulate the stress response, including safe and supportive relationships, regular exercise, good sleep hygiene and high-quality sleep, healthy nutrition, mindfulness practices, and mental health treatment (if indicated).
- Identifying ACEs and other social determinants of health in children and adults, and providing targeted intervention, can improve efficacy and efficiency of care, support individual and family health and well-being, and reduce long-term health costs.
- Trauma-informed care is critical for reducing the impacts of ACEs, improving patient outcomes, and changing lives.

## ACEs Aware in California

- The ACEs Aware initiative offers Medi-Cal providers training, clinical protocols, and payment for screening children and adults for ACEs. Screening for ACEs, and responding with trauma-informed care, can significantly improve the health and well-being of individuals and families.
- Effective January 1, 2020, qualified Medi-Cal providers are eligible for a \$29 payment for qualifying ACE screenings for patients with full-scope Medi-Cal.
- Beginning July 1, 2020, to receive payment, providers must have completed a certified training and self-attest to completing it.
- In the 2019-20 budget, Governor Gavin Newsom provided \$40.8 million to DHCS for ACE screenings among children and adults enrolled in Medi-Cal. This funding is allocated from Proposition 56 and is part of the "California for All" initiative.



### **About the California Surgeon General**

The role of California Surgeon General was created in 2019 by Gov. Gavin Newsom to advise the Governor, serve as a leading spokesperson on matters of public health, and drive solutions to our most pressing public health challenges. As California's first Surgeon General, Dr. Nadine Burke Harris has established early childhood, health equity, and ACEs and toxic stress as key priorities. Dr. Burke Harris has set a bold goal to reduce ACEs and toxic stress by half in one generation.

### **About DHCS**

The mission of DHCS is to provide Californians with access to affordable, integrated, high-quality health care, including medical, dental, mental health, substance use treatment services, and long-term care. DHCS' vision is to preserve and improve the overall health and well-being of all Californians. DHCS funds health care services for about 13 million Medi-Cal beneficiaries.