



Fast Facts 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), is creating 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 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

- ACEs are stressful or traumatic events experienced before age 18 that were identified in the landmark [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\) and Kaiser Permanente \(KP\) Adverse Childhood Experiences Study](#) conducted among more than 17,000 adult patients.
- An acronym for Adverse Childhood Experiences, the term ACEs specifically refers to 10 categories of adversities in three domains: physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; physical or emotional neglect; and household dysfunction that includes growing up in a household with parental incarceration, mental illness, substance dependence, absence due to separation or divorce, or intimate partner violence.
- ACEs and toxic stress represent a public health crisis that has been, until recently, largely unrecognized by the health care system and society.
- According to CDC data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS, 2017):
 - 62 percent of American adults in 23 states have experienced at least one of the eight ACEs tracked by the BRFSS, and 15 percent of adults in 23 states have experienced four or more.
 - In California, 63.5 percent of Californians have experienced at least one ACE, and 17.6 percent of Californians have experienced four or more ACEs.
- ACEs cross ethnic, social-economic, 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 childhood development, is a root cause to some of the most harmful, persistent, and expensive health challenges facing the nation, including nine of the ten 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 trauma-informed care can improve health outcomes.
- Treatments for improving outcomes for individuals who have experienced ACEs, may include practices targeted at regulating the stress response system including meditation, regular exercise, quality sleep, balanced nutrition, and counseling.
- Identifying cases of trauma in children and adults, and providing treatment, can lower long-term health costs and support individual and family wellness and healing.
- 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. Detecting ACEs early and connecting patients to interventions, resources, and other support can improve the health and well-being of individuals and families.
- Beginning on January 1, 2020, DHCS will pay providers \$29 per trauma screening for children and adults with Medi-Cal coverage. By July 2020, providers must self-attest that the training has been completed in order to be eligible to continue receiving Medi-Cal payment for conducting ACEs screenings.
- In the 2019-20 budget, Governor Gavin Newsom provided \$40.8 million to DHCS for ACEs 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 Governor 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.