



ACEs Aware Managed Care Plan Resource Guide

July 15, 2021

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Letter from Dr. Karen Mark

July 15, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your interest in the ACEs Aware initiative. The purpose of this Resource Guide is to provide strategies and information to help you learn more about how your health plan can be an active part of Trauma-Informed Networks of Care in your service areas. Your role as a trusted source in the community makes you an important part of this effort and we look forward to your partnership.

As you may know, cumulative adversity, especially when experienced during critical and sensitive periods of child development, is a root cause to some of the most harmful, persistent, and expensive health challenges facing our state and nation – from heart disease to homelessness.^{1,2} Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. The term “ACEs” refers to 10 categories of adversities in three domains – abuse, neglect, and household challenges – experienced by age 18 years that were evaluated in the 1998 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente landmark study of the same name.³

ACEs cross ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, and geographic lines and affect millions of Californians – in fact, 62% of us have had at least one ACE. Children are uniquely vulnerable to the effects of an overactive stress response because their brains and bodies are still developing. Parental ACEs and toxic stress can also affect the health of subsequent generations – with effects transmitted from parent to child and even to grandchild.

But there is hope. We can take action now to save lives. Screening for and responding to ACEs and toxic stress with evidence-based interventions and trauma-informed care can help patients achieve positive health outcomes despite their negative childhood experiences. This is where you come in.



The ACEs Aware initiative is partnering with organizations and communities across the state to ensure that Medi-Cal clinical teams have the training, tools, and resources they need to effectively conduct ACE screenings and treat the impacts of toxic stress. Medi-Cal managed care plans have a critical role to play in supporting and motivating their providers in committing to these efforts.

Specifically, we are excited about the opportunities for Medi-Cal managed care plans to:

- Support systems-level adoption and implementation of ACE screening, response, and trauma-informed care;
- Ensure Medi-Cal clinicians have information about and access to necessary services and supports to help patients mitigate the toxic stress response; and
- Partner with and incentivize providers to bolster the member experience following an ACE screening – conducting a full health risk assessment, devising a trauma-informed treatment plan, and assisting families in navigating the referral and response process.

I hope that the materials included in this guide will be useful to you and your teams in advancing the important work of screening for ACEs, providing trauma-informed care, and mitigating the effects of toxic stress. Together, through the ACEs Aware initiative, we can improve the lives and health outcomes of our beneficiaries.

I look forward to our continued collaboration.

Karen Mark, M.D., Ph.D.

Medical Director

California Department of Health Care Services



Section 1 – The Role of Health Plans in the ACES Aware Initiative

In California, approximately 83 percent of Medi-Cal beneficiaries are enrolled in a Medi-Cal managed care plan (MCP).⁴ Engaging MCP leadership is vital to the success of the ACES Aware initiative, both at a statewide and local level. There are multiple ways for MCPs to be involved in the initiative to support better outcomes for their members.

Specifically, we are excited about the opportunities for Medi-Cal managed care plans to:

- Support systems-level adoption and implementation of ACE screening, response, and trauma-informed care;
- Ensure Medi-Cal clinicians have information about and access to necessary services and supports to help patients mitigate the toxic stress response; and
- Partner with and incentivize providers to bolster the member experience following an ACE screening – conducting a full health risk assessment, devising a trauma-informed treatment plan, and assisting families in navigating the referral and response process.

Local Relationships and Community Partnerships

Since July 2020, ACES Aware has awarded \$45.1 million in grants to 137 community-based organizations (CBOs), federally qualified health centers (FQHCs), universities, and local government agencies to help cultivate cross-sector Trauma-Informed Networks of Care that support providers, individuals, and families in preventing and addressing the impact of ACEs and toxic stress on health.

- As outlined in our Network of Care Roadmap, a Trauma-Informed Network of Care is a group of interdisciplinary health, education, and human service professionals, community members, and organizations that support adults, children, and families by providing access to evidence-

based “buffering” resources and supports that help to prevent, treat, and heal the harmful consequences of toxic stress. Managed care plans should review the Roadmap, which has more information on the vital role they play in establishing a Trauma-Informed Network of Care:

<https://www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Aces-Aware-Network-of-Care-Roadmap.pdf>

- Managed care organizations have a critical role to play as partners in local Trauma-Informed Networks of Care. MCPs are increasingly being asked to provide their members with an array of care coordination services and supports addressing social needs (e.g., housing, food insecurity). While these social determinants of health are distinct from ACEs, efforts aimed at supporting patients experiencing toxic-stress related to either category are closely aligned.
- MCPs across California are working closely with ACEs Aware Grantees today to build and augment local Trauma-Informed Networks of Care. There are many ways for MCPs to participate in local ACEs Aware activities: by joining workgroups or steering committees, establishing partnerships with Grantee organizations, and sponsoring local education and outreach activities. Information on ACEs Aware Grantees can be found here: <https://www.acesaware.org/grants/grant-program-information/>

Connecting with Contracted Providers and Delegated Entities

Managed care plans can use their robust education and communication infrastructures to funnel information to provider and member networks, offering direct assistance, engagement, and training opportunities. MCPs should take an active role in promoting training completion among their network providers as well as regularly reminding them about the benefits of screening for ACEs, the value it can bring to patient care and clinical practice, and the Medi-Cal requirements for payment.



- Including ACEs Aware content in provider newsletters and health plan provider manuals will ensure they are well equipped to screen. This communication should also include details on Medi-Cal reimbursement and how to interface with MCP's to share data.
- MCPs that are delegating the operation and oversight of some aspects of ACE screening implementation downstream, such as to delegated entities and Independent Physician Associations (IPAs), should discuss ACEs Aware efforts during joint operating committee meetings (JOCs) and share information and resources with their delegates.
- Leveraging the data that ACEs Aware has [made available](#) that details the number of ACE screenings conducted to date and the number of Medi-Cal providers who have completed the "Becoming ACEs Aware in California" training can be an effective strategy for targeting providers and communities where adoption of ACE screening needs further encouragement.

Operational Infrastructure to Support Care Management

Tapping into MCPs' operational infrastructure will help support program sustainability and bolster the efforts of individual providers, local clinics, and CBOs.

- MCPs should leverage existing MCP-provider network data exchange pathways to share screening data and referral information. This will enable MCPs to support tracking of referrals and incorporate the ACE screening into member care management plans. Ultimately, such tracking and information exchange can allow plans and providers to establish a closed loop referral system.
- This may also include establishing agreements with ACEs Aware grantees and clinics to share ACE screenings and care plans. ACEs Aware will provide more direction and tools around this process in the future.



Monitoring and Oversight of Screening, Billing, and Reimbursement

A key health plan function is to ensure claims are paid timely and that only eligible providers receive payment for ACE screenings. These activities include collecting encounter data, tracking attestation and screening data, and distributing payments to providers reflected on the claims and encounters.

- DHCS maintains a list of providers who have attested to completing a certified ACEs Aware Core Training. DHCS updates the ACEs Provider Training Attestation data file once per month on the first of the month.
- Other entities that bill Medi-Cal may request provider attestation data for program implementation purposes, such as confirming that providers have submitted an attestation form.

The table below summarizes key activities within managed care plan operational areas that may be implemented to support the MCP's role in the Network of Care.

Exhibit 1: Medi-Cal Managed Care Plan Role in the Network of Care

MCP Department	Product Operations/IT	Provider Network Operations	Claims/Finance	Care Management/Social Services	Internal/External Communications
Activities	Include ACEs Aware information in member and provider materials	Use internal data to monitor which providers are ACEs Aware-certified and conducting ACE screenings; discuss oversight at Joint Operating Committee meetings	Receive and process ACE screening claims	Connect with providers on screening results and referrals; support members with referral follow up	Conduct internal ACEs Aware trainings to support organizational adoption of Trauma-Informed Care principles
	Monitor ACE screening results data from providers/CBOs	Increase awareness of available screening reimbursement		Integrate ACE screening results into care plan for ongoing management	Notify provider network and members about available resources
<i>Partner with local ACEs Aware Grantees and CBOs as member of Network of Care</i>					

Section 2 - Additional MCP Reports and Resources

ACE Screening Implementation How-To Guide

ACEs Aware recently released an ACE Screening Implementation “How-To Guide” that provides practical, step-by-step guidance, tools, and resources to help clinics complete their ACE screening implementation journey. The How-To Guide includes information and tools for clinical leadership and champions to encourage clinical practice adoption and integration of routine ACE screening, evidence-based interventions, and trauma-informed care. The goal in creating a How-To Guide is to promote faster, broader, and more accessible clinical adoption of ACE screening and systems change across California.

The first part of the How-To Guide, ***Preparing the Foundation***, is available now at: <https://www.acesaware.org/implement-screening/stage-1-prepare-foundation/>. Subsequent stages will be added in the coming months.

ACEs Aware Grantees

As noted above, Aurrera Health Group has planned, designed, and executed two rounds of ACEs Aware grants totaling \$45 million in funds being distributed between July 1, 2020, and June 30, 2022.

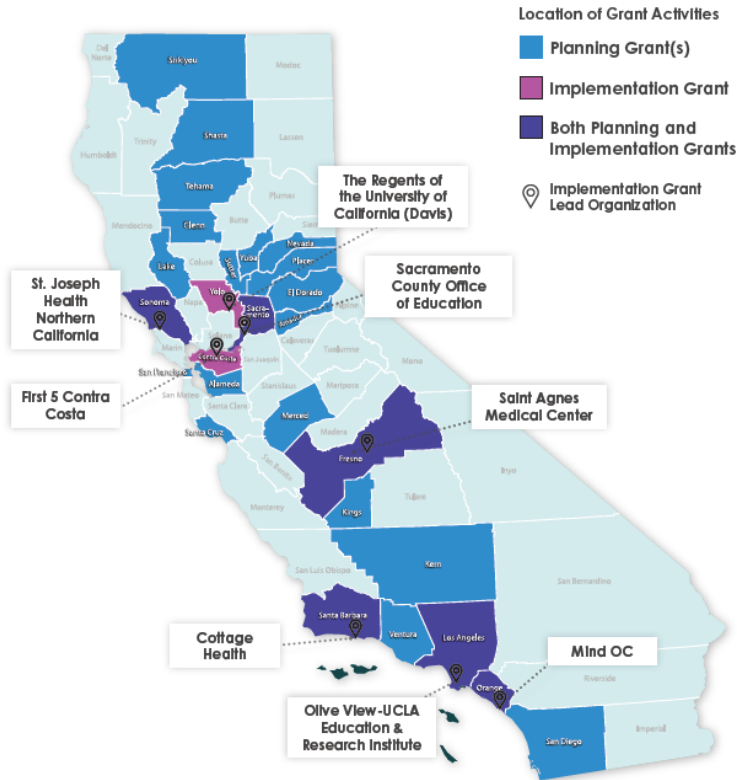
Round 1 Grants (Provider Training, Engagement, and Communications):

- \$14.3 million for 150 Grants to 100 organizations.
- 52 Grants will expire on June 30, 2021.
- 99 Grants continue through December 2021 via no-cost extensions.

Round 2 Grants (Network of Care Grantees):

- \$30.8 million in grants to 35 communities across California.
- 26 Planning Grants of \$300,000 each operating through September 2021.
- 8 Implementation Grant awards of \$3 million each – February 2021 through June 2022.

Exhibit 2: Trauma Informed Network of Care Grant Awards



Trauma-Informed Network of Care Roadmap

The Trauma-Informed Network of Care Roadmap provides clinical teams, community-based organizations, and social service agencies with guidance on the key elements and milestones for establishing a robust and effective system for responding to ACE screenings and mitigating the toxic stress response in their communities. The Roadmap outlines milestones – for health care clinical teams, as well as for communities – in a specific and actionable manner that can be applied in a variety of settings and contexts.

To access the information on each Milestone and the full report, please download the Trauma-Informed Network of Care Roadmap at: <https://www.acesaware.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/Aces-Aware-Network-of-Care-Roadmap.pdf>

Exhibit 3: Clinical Response to Identification of Toxic Stress



Clinician Directory

ACEs Aware offers a searchable ACEs Aware Clinician Directory and map, which is designed to assist patients, community-based organizations, and social service agencies in identifying ACEs Aware-trained clinicians in their communities.

The ACEs Aware Clinician Directory includes a subset of ACEs Aware certified Medi-Cal providers who have attested to completing the core Becoming ACEs Aware in California training, and are eligible to receive Medi-Cal payment for providing qualified ACE screenings.

MCPs can use this tool to track local clinician engagement and share with patients to identify other providers who are trained in ACE screening and response. MCPs should encourage their network providers to opt-in to the



Clinician Directory upon completion of an ACEs Aware Core Training when submitting the [ACE Training Attestation form](#).

The ACEs Aware Clinician Directory is available at <https://www.acesaware.org/screen/certification-payment/provider-directory/>

Clinical Team Webinars

ACEs Aware hosts monthly clinical team educational webinars on a range of relevant topics to support and equip clinical teams to screen and respond to ACEs and toxic stress. Many of these webinars offer Continuing Medical Education (CME)/Maintenance of Certification (MOC) credits.

For information about upcoming webinars and to access previous webinars, visit: <https://www.acesaware.org/heal/educational-events/>

Clinical Team Toolkit

The Clinical Team Toolkit offers information and resources to help Medi-Cal clinicians screen, treat, and heal patients. This includes information on how to get certified to screen for ACEs, assess risk for toxic stress, implement evidence-based interventions and trauma-informed care, and receive Medi-Cal payment for conducting screenings.

Clinical Team Toolkit: <https://www.acesaware.org/heal/provider-toolkit/>

¹ Roos LE, Mota N, Afifi TO, Katz LY, Distasio J, Sareen JJAJoPH. Relationship between Adverse Childhood Experiences and homelessness and the impact of axis I and II disorders. 2013; 103(S2): S275-S81.

² Hughes K, Bellis MA, Hardcastle KA, et al. The effect of multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences on health: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *The Lancet Public Health* 2017; 2(8): e356–e66.

³ Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., . . . Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *Am J Prev Med*, 14(4), 245-258.

⁴ Department of Health Care Services, January 2021. Medi-Cal Monthly Eligible Fast Facts, January 2021 as of the MEDS Cut-off for April 2021. California Department of Health Care Services.