

20+ Years of Addressing Childhood Trauma in Communities

Trauma, once considered rare, is now recognized as a pervasive societal problem that can have profound effects on a person's well-being. Trauma refers to any experience in which an individual is exposed to or confronted by a negative event that threatens his or her sense of safety – or witnesses these events inflicted on a family member, friend, or peer. An estimated 70 percent of U.S. adults have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives.¹

The experience of trauma cuts across people of all socioeconomic statuses, ages, races, and backgrounds. However, individuals and communities that experience discrimination in any form are disproportionately affected by trauma. Trauma can also occur through adverse childhood experiences (or ACEs), such as abuse and household dysfunction. ACEs can impact adult outcomes of disease, quality of life, care utilization, and mortality. In 2016, nearly half of U.S. children – 34 million – had at least one ACE and more than 20 percent experienced two or more.²

A brief history of Kaiser Permanente and childhood trauma

Kaiser Permanente's leadership in addressing childhood trauma began with a seminal study conducted in 1995-1997 through a partnership with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The study revealed that

the greater the number of ACEs a person had, the more likely and the greater the burden of chronic illnesses, including diabetes, cancer, heart disease, chronic lung disease, substance use disorder, and mental health problems.³ The results of this study have since been validated in more than 1,500 peer-reviewed studies.

What is Kaiser Permanente doing to address childhood trauma today?

Today's health care system faces significant challenges to addressing the need for mental health services – including the complex health issues associated with trauma – across the lifespan. Kaiser Permanente is committed to empowering its members to maximize their total health – mind, body, and spirit – by building a health care model that better integrates mental health services with primary care and community supports to better address mental health needs early on.

One of the ways Kaiser Permanente supports the total health of its communities is through its Community Health portfolio, which includes programs that ensure health access by providing individuals with integrated health and social services and efforts to improve the conditions for health and equity in Kaiser Permanente communities. Over the past 4 years, Kaiser Permanente has invested nearly \$9 million to fund programs related to the prevention or treatment of trauma in children.

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Kaiser Permanente's trauma-related investments include:

ACE|R framework
has been adopted
by more than

15

communities
in California



Building resilient communities.

Kaiser Permanente is refining a community resilience strategy, which starts by exploring the most effective entry points for community trauma-informed approaches such as community safety and violence prevention, delivering human services and

early childhood services and working with the justice system. This work also integrates its resiliency efforts with school and safety net partners in the education and clinical sectors, detailed below. Through a multi-year partnership, Kaiser Permanente supported and partnered with the Prevention Institute to develop an Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience (ACE|R) framework to understand community-level trauma as manifested in the social-cultural environment, the physical/built environment and the economic environment. The framework has been broadly disseminated, and as a result, has been adopted and implemented by more than 15 communities and embedded in state-wide policy efforts in California.

Fostering resilience in schools. Evidence suggests that trauma and associated mental health symptoms can interfere with student learning, school engagement, and academic performance. Schools offering safe and supportive environments may buffer the negative impacts of trauma and foster resilience among students. Kaiser Permanente's Thriving Schools initiative helps schools develop policies and practices to become more trauma-informed, promote student and staff resilience, and connect schools to clinical and community-based resilience or trauma resources. Thriving Schools' primary focus on trauma/resilience has been through the Resilience in School Environments (RISE) initiative, which

aims to foster long-term positive outcomes such as improved school climate, decreased student and staff absenteeism, and decreased staff turnover. Key RISE partners include the Los Angeles Education Partnership, the Collaborative Learning for Educational Achievement and Resilience (CLEAR) program at Washington State University, and the University of California, San Francisco's Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS) program at Colorado's Aurora Mental Health Center. More than 50 schools serving 26,500 students across Kaiser Permanente regions are developing these programs to improve the resilience and social and emotional well-being of children and school staff.

More than **50** schools serving
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that improve the well-being
of children



Strengthening the safety net in clinical settings. Trauma-informed care and resilience investments in the clinical setting have focused on trauma treatment, specifically adoption, standardization and dissemination of trauma-informed care practices by providers in primary care settings. In addition, grantmaking in Kaiser Permanente's Northern California region has supported interventions to bring a trauma-informed care and resilience approach to locations where youth are served such as community clinics.

These trauma and resilience efforts align with Kaiser Permanente's commitment to promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of its members, workforce, and the communities it serves.

¹ Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Fact Sheet, Sidran Traumatic Stress Institute, 2018. Available www.sidran.org/resources/for-survivors-and-loved-ones/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-fact-sheet/

² Traumatic Experiences Widespread Among U.S. Youth, New Data Show, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, October 19, 2017. Available www.rwjf.org/en/library/articles-and-news/2017/10/traumatic-experiences-widespread-among-u-s-youth--new-data-show.html

³ About the CDC-Kaiser ACE Study, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Division of Violence Prevention, June 14, 2016. Available www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/about.html