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A multigenerational, life-span approach

<u>Science tells us</u> that the root cause of the leading social, emotional and health challenges are due to the <u>"toxic stress"</u> too many children experience growing up.

Violence, drug and alcohol abuse and/or lack of a nurturing adult in a child's life leaves an imprint on the child's developing brain in a <u>variety of ways</u>. Some of these are likely to play out in later <u>chronic disease</u>.

To effectively treat, intervene, and prevent early adversity, we need to work across family generations as well as across the life-span.

A family-based approach, itself multi-generational, is critical for children. If we treat the child without engaging the family, the child returns to an unchanged family unit, where the adversity is likely to re-occur.

Building Flourishing Communities Update*

*an occasional newsletter

Building Flourishing Communities is Vermont's initiative to implement the <u>Self-Healing Communities model</u> (SHC) from Washington State's *ACE Interface*. Since a highly successful summit in December, a small group from the Agency of Human Services has been working to:1) secure funding for the SHC's Master Train the Trainer program 2) identify an appropriate community-oriented non-profit organization to provide fiscal sponsorship for a public-private entity that will carry this work forward; 3) draft a 3-year business plan 4) set up a steering committee.

Vermont's Promise Communities Invest in BFC!

BFC will host the Master Train the Training event this summer. The Vermont Promise Community Initiative is providing the funds for the training and organizing the event. As of this writing, we hope to hold the training in mid-August.

The collaboration between BFC and Promise Communities benefits both initiatives. Promise Communities is a project of Vermont's Early Learning Challenge – Race to the Top Grant.



Vermont won the four-year, \$36.9 million federal grant in 2013. The overall aim of the grant is to help build a high-quality and accessible early childhood system, so that all children will be ready to succeed in kindergarten and have a solid foundation for continuing success as they grow.

For its part, Promise Communities supports collaboration across sectors in communities with at least one elementary school. A primary aim is to help communities address challenges such as

What are AFEs?

The <u>Adverse Childhood</u> <u>Experiences</u> concept is retrospective – adults are asked about their experiences as children. There are 10 ACEs, including emotional and physical abuse and neglect and household dysfunction, such as having a family member incarcerated or living with a substance abuser.

Adverse Family Experiences,

on the other hand, are asked of parents about their children's experiences (ages 0-17).

Because the questions are asked of parents, the topics differ from ACEs. There are nine AFEs: socioeconomic hardship, divorce, separation or death of a parent, living with a substance abuser, or with a family member with mental illness, witnessing neighborhood violence, witnessing domestic violence, having an incarcerated family member, experiencing racism or other prejudicial treatment.

In Vermont, we have data from 2010-2011 that tells us that 49.4% of Vermont children had no AFEs, 27.3% had one, and 23.3% had two or more.

Of those with 2 or more AFEs, 13.8% were between the ages of 0 and 5, and 26.3% were between 6 and 11 years.

These data are particularly sobering given the prevalence of two or more AFEs in such young children. limited transportation, inter-generational poverty, lack of affordable housing and local employment opportunities, since these factors create barriers to success for young children.

There are 24 Promise Communities across Vermont, though some began work under the grant in 2015, others in 2016, and still others are just beginning work. Each is represented by a coalition that includes parents, as well as the local services providers. Initially, the group assesses needs in the community and then develops a plan to improve the educational and developmental outcomes for the children in the community. For more on Promise Communities, follow this link: http://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/promise-communities

Progress on Other Fronts

To change the ACEs landscape, we need to not only change the ways our culture supports high ACE scores, but to sustain that change. As anyone who has made changes in their personal life knows, changing behavior and expectations is hard work. Accomplishing change across a community is that much more complex and will require a sustained commitment. For that reason, BFC is a long-term initiative and needs to be supported by a dedicated group of people with a range of experience, skills and talents; we need clear goals and a strong "home" to ensure the administrative functions are handled responsibly.

Toward those ends, the "think tank" that convened in February helped with the drafting of a business plan, which includes criteria for selecting a fiscal sponsor. Fiscal sponsorship is a formal arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization provides a "home" for a project that lacks tax-exempt status. With a fiscal sponsor, BFC would not have to start its own non-profit, yet we could accept tax-deductible donations and apply for grants under the fiscal sponsor's tax-exempt status.

We have met with three candidates for fiscal sponsorship. The steering committee (see below) will consider the information we have gotten from each and make the final decision of which we will go with. The goal is to have a fiscal sponsor in place by June 15th.

Current BFC Steering Committee members: Dana Anderson, Addison & Rutland Regional Coordinator, Building Bright Futures; Julie Cadwallader-Staub, Grant Director, Vermont's Early Learning Challenge; Paul Dragon, Director of Policy & Program Integration, Agency of Human Services; Kathy Hentcy, Director, Mental Health & Health Care Integration, Department of Mental Health; Danielle Lindley, Director, Children, Youth & Family Services Division, Northwestern Counseling & Support Services, Tricia Long, Director, Resilience Beyond Incarceration; Carol Maloney, Director, Integrating Family Services, Agency of Human Services; Bill McMains, Medical Director, Child, Adolescent & Family Unit, Department of Mental Health; Chuck Myers, Executive Director, Northeastern Family Institute; Julianne Nickerson, Promise Community Director, Department of Children & Families; Priscilla White, Child Victim Treatment Director, Department of Children & Families; Laural Ruggles, VP of Marketing & Community Health Improvement, Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital.

As you can see, half of the committee members are state employees. While representation of state agencies is necessary, we need more representation from all areas of the state, more service sectors and community members. Please forward any suggestions you may have for candidates to: Kathleen.hentcy@vermont.gov.

Please note, this will be a formal steering committee with voting rights and obligations once we have chosen a fiscal sponsor and establish governance and other rules. The initial members were either part of the think tank or otherwise already involved and committed to the BFC principles. Going forward, however, we will follow a nomination-and-vote structure to add members.