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## **FIRST 5 CONTRA COSTA AWARDED NEARLY \$300,000 ACEs AWARE GRANT**

First 5 Contra Costa in partnership with Contra Costa Health Services Department, Trauma Transformed, and the Employment and Human Services Department has received \$299,261 in grant funds from the Office of the California Surgeon General (CA-OSG) and the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to participate in the state's ACEs Aware initiative.

"The ACEs Aware grant will support ongoing county-level efforts to develop a trauma-informed system of care that is now more than ever urgently needed in light of the COVID-19 pandemic," said Ruth Fernandez, Executive Director, First 5 Contra Costa.

First 5 Contra Costa and their partners will be conducting supplemental provider training, provider engagement activities, as well as a range of communications strategies to promote the ACEs Aware initiative among the Medi-Cal provider community in Contra Costa County.

"We are excited to lead this collaborative effort for our County," said Wanda Davis, Early Intervention Program Officer, First 5 Contra Costa. "Young children are particularly vulnerable to toxic stress as their brains continuously develop during the first 5 years. Through early detection, we can mitigate the impact of ACEs and improve health outcomes starting from birth."

A total of \$14.3 million was awarded to 100 organizations throughout the state to extend the reach and impact of the ACEs Aware initiative. ACEs Aware seeks to change and save lives by helping Medi-Cal providers understand the importance of



screening for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and training them to respond with trauma-informed care.

“Many people will experience trauma and toxic stress at some point in their lives,” said Gerold Loenicker, chief of Contra Costa Health Services’ Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services. “The earlier we respond to a traumatic event, the more we can mitigate its impact on the health and well-being of the person experiencing it, their families, and the communities they are part of. The ACEs grant will support our work to help people recover and grow from their adverse experiences.”

The ACEs Aware grants will provide funding to organizations to design and implement training, provider engagement, and education activities for providers and organizations that serve Medi-Cal beneficiaries.

“We are looking forward to working in partnership with this amazing group of community leaders to further our efforts to help health care providers become ACEs Aware,” said California Surgeon General Dr. Nadine Burke Harris. “This work is critical, now more than ever, given the stress so many Californians are experiencing as a result of COVID-19 and the role of racial injustice as a risk factor for toxic stress. A trauma-informed health care workforce is vital for helping our state heal.”

The grant funding will provide critical support to community organizations serving Medi-Cal providers and beneficiaries, which have been experiencing increased stress during the COVID-19 emergency. Grant activities will augment California’s efforts, underway since the summer of 2019, to develop provider training and engage providers, including the promotion of payments to Medi-Cal providers for screening their patients for ACEs.

“Contra Costa’s Employment & Human Services Department and The Alliance to End Abuse looks forward to strengthening and furthering its work around ACEs, trauma-informed care and toxic stress through this collaborative initiative,” said Alex Madsen, Division Manager, Alliance to End Abuse, Employment & Human Services Department. “Now more than ever, we should be treating ACEs, and root causes of ACEs such as generational poverty and systemic racism, as a public health crisis.”



Funding for the ACEs Aware grants was previously authorized in the 2019-20 budget using Proposition 56 funds for provider training on how to conduct ACE screening in the Medi-Cal population. In light of the COVID-19 emergency, the grant funding will provide critical support to the community organizations serving Medi-Cal providers and beneficiaries.

The full list of ACEs Aware grantees is available on the [ACEs Aware Website](#).

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#### **About First 5 Contra Costa**

[First 5 Contra Costa](#) helps young children start school healthy, nurtured and ready to learn by investing in programs and activities focused on child development.

#### **About Contra Costa Employment & Human Services Department (EHSD)**

[Contra Costa Employment & Human Services Department \(EHSD\)](#) partners with the community to deliver quality services to ensure access to resources that support, protect, and empower individuals and families to achieve self-sufficiency.

#### **About Contra Costa Health Services**

[Contra Costa Health Services](#) has a mission to care for and improve the health of all people in Contra Costa County with special attention to those who are most vulnerable to health problems.

#### **About ACEs Aware**

Led by Dr. Nadine Burke Harris, California Surgeon General, and Dr. Karen Mark, Medical Director for DHCS, the ACEs Aware initiative offers Medi-Cal providers core training, screening tools, clinical protocols, and payment for screening children and adults for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), which are stressful or traumatic experiences people have by age 18 that were identified in the [landmark ACE Study](#). ACEs describe 10 categories of adversities in three domains – abuse, neglect, and/or household dysfunction. ACEs are strongly associated with at least nine out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the United States. Part of Governor Gavin



Newsom's *California for All* initiative, the goal of ACEs Aware is to reduce ACEs and toxic stress by half in one generation. Follow ACEs Aware on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#), and [Instagram](#).