

Actions 4 ACEs Announces Back-to-School Campaign to Build Educator Awareness for Adverse Childhood Experiences

Campaign to Provide Critical Resources to Help 200,000 Educators is Part of a Broad Statewide Effort to Address Childhood Trauma

TRENTON, N.J., USA, September 1, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Actions 4 ACEs](#), a statewide campaign to expand public awareness of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), is launching a new back-to-school campaign to help children returning to school and in-person learning this fall readjust to day-to-day life and approach the new challenges and stressors posed by the pandemic. The campaign, #TraumaTools: Promoting Healing, Recovery, and Wellness this School Year, will build awareness among educators, school staff, and law enforcement to help offset the effects of childhood trauma as students head back to school and includes downloadable materials, training for educators, and a social media campaign.

ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (ages 0-17). These events are common, and can include parental separation; experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; or having a loved one attempt or die by suicide. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood, and can negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential. Nationally, two out of three children have had at least one ACE, and the stress and isolation of the pandemic have constituted an extra psychological burden for virtually all children, whether they have experienced an ACE or not.

“Our nation’s children are suffering both a mental health crisis and an educational challenge amid the pandemic,” said Michael Yogman, MD, FAAP, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Harvard Medical School; Chair, Child Mental Health Task Force, Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics. “We must seize this opportunity and make sure that all children have someone they can turn to, that they can trust within a consistent, positive and nurturing relationship. This benefits our children, our society, and our future.”

A Broad Statewide Effort

Actions 4 ACEs is part of the growing movement to make New Jersey a trauma-informed, healing-centered state, which includes the Healing Centered Schools project, an effort to create more stable and supportive learning environments for children, and Handle With Care, a program that links law enforcement with schools to support children experiencing ACEs.

The Healing-Centered Schools project was established by the Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) and the professional learning division of the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, in partnership with the New Jersey Education Association and the Mental Health Association in New Jersey. The pilot project was launched during the 2020-2021 school year with 26 schools in New Jersey; Another 25 schools will be added this academic year. To date, more than 2,000 New Jersey educators and school staff, including custodians, cafeteria workers, and school nurses, have been trained on ACEs through the pilot initiative.

Actions 4 ACEs is actively supporting the Handle With Care (HWC) program through an awareness and promotion campaign, which is building partnerships between New Jersey law enforcement and schools. The program, first developed in West Virginia, allows law enforcement agents to alert schools when a student has experienced or witnessed a potential traumatic event and may need to be “handled with care” by being given extra support and sensitivity. The schools then can offer appropriate counseling and support services. Last year, the New Jersey Attorney General issued a directive requiring all law enforcement agencies in the state to implement the HWC program.

“After more than a year of living in a pandemic, children need support as they readjust to school and overcome the stressors caused by COVID-19,” said Dave Ellis, Executive Director of the Office of Resilience in the NJ Department of Children and Families. “When children feel connected and supported, they are more likely to grow up to become healthy, competent, and educated adults. The past year has been trying for all of us, which is why Actions 4 ACEs wants to help start this school year out right with free resources that adults can use to mitigate the effects of adverse childhood experiences.”

“We know that trauma can inhibit a child’s ability to learn, develop language skills, and create healthy attachments. The stress and isolation of the pandemic has contributed to worsening student mental health,” said Atiya Weiss, Executive Director of the Burke Foundation, a member of the NJ ACEs Collaborative. “Our ground-breaking partnerships are activating supportive relationships with children through simple actions such as sharing encouragement and creating safe and predictable environments.”

You can find Actions 4 ACEs’ resources [here](#) and learn more about the initiative [here](#).

Jennifer Baskerville

Actions 4 ACEs

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