



There are broadly held misconceptions about how mysterious healthy adult development is, especially when childhood is riddled with abuse or adversity. But it is possible to interrupt the effects of early childhood processes. Adults need not face chronic disease, mental health issues and poverty. It is no mystery how to increase people's chances of reaching their potential while remaining physically and emotionally healthy.

It's not a mystery, but this information is a) underutilized and b) not widespread. Recent research in both brain science and economics concludes that that quality early childhood care and education, beginning at birth, provide the most cost effective method of achieving healthy, productive lives.

Support for early childhood care and education as a driver of economic prosperity is increasing in Maine. Since 2007, numerous conferences, articles, and educational workshops held in Maine have recruited "atypical champions," to conceptually and fiscally invest in and advocate for more than nine years for early childhood care and education. These champions found their way to early childhood from the business, military and armed forces, and legislative communities. They have seen the science and have come to understand the clear links between early childhood investment and individual, community and economic thriving. It is precisely because of new champions that the "typical champions," (those who work with and on behalf of children and families), that Maine is in a powerful position to make a difference in the lives of our citizens' and, at the same time, transform the Maine economy.

In addition to the brain and economic research, an additional (and growing) body of research sheds light on the impact of early childhood on individuals and communities. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study conducted by Kaiser Permanente and the Centers for Disease Control demonstrated the relationship between experiences in early childhood and later adult health and behavioral outcomes. The ACEs study examined the impact of severe environmental conditions that children experience, including physical, sexual and emotional abuse, lack of a parent due to jail, death or abandonment, mental illness or substance abuse use in the home or witnessing their mother being beaten. The findings of the study showed that when children experience ACEs, the long term consequences for their adult health included chronic illness, obesity, drug and alcohol abuse, smoking, depression, suicidality, early pregnancy, fetal death and early death.

Based on this research, there are concrete steps that communities can take to educate their citizens, and create supportive networks for children and families. This type of work is

beginning in Maine, and Maine has been recognized for our innovative statewide work on ACEs. In fact, Maine is the only state currently conducting a statewide initiative related to ACEs through the Maine Resilience Building Network (MRBN) initiative. MRBN was nationally recognized by the National Coalition on Adversity and Resilience (NCAR), an initiative supported by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in partnership with the Institute for Safe Families, for the diversity and strength of our initiative.

Multiyear support from the Early Childhood Funders Group will enable the Maine Resilience Building Network to focus on ACEs education and local support building throughout Maine by supporting technical assistance, communications and outreach in tangible ways. This Concept Paper highlights the fundable activities, building upon already established initiatives.

**The Maine Resilience Building Network** communities collaborate about how to best implement the research findings at their local level. The conceptualization, development and continued growth of the Maine Resilience Building Network – or MRBN – has been remarkably organic and from the “bottom up.”



**Background** - Grassroots planning in October 2011 at multiple meetings focused on goal setting and program brainstorming culminated in the first MRBN meeting in February 2012. What started with eight (8) sites (local-level initiatives) has grown to more than 50 sites since that time. The local efforts of each site varies in their approach to inform and prevent ACEs in Maine's youngest citizens and their families. The common core message across all sites is the ACEs research and the importance of resilience to provide a buffer to the effects of ACEs.

**The Collective Impact Model** guides the work of MRBN. Many of the MRBN sites are working with local community collaboratives with broad based representation of those “usual” and “unusual” voices. A MRBN member site might actually represent three (3) individuals; other sites range between 15-65 members. As a result, there are more than 1,075 individual members who are connected to the work of MRBN statewide. The individuals and collaboratives are composed of parents/caregivers, health, medical, early care/development, clergy, education, law enforcement, social services, behavioral health, mental health, substance abuse and business.





In April 2013, MRBN members spent a day with Dr. Vincent Felitti (co-author of the ACE Study) who provided an update on the ACEs research and then learned about Maine's local efforts, and ways in which our collective work will continue.

### **A Sampling of MRBN's Diverse Site Initiatives**

*Opportunity Alliance (OA)* is a large urban area social service provider that is implementing ACEs within their agency and throughout the more than 50 social programs that it administers. OA is moving to implement a "Community of Practice" (COP) which will cross multiple departments focused on ACEs, the implications upon their work and how to embed best practices for both staff and clients into their work to effect positive and sustainable change. This will include possible impacts upon their policies and procedures such as their Employee Assistance Program (EAP). This work will be facilitated by the Maine Children's Initiative (MCI). MCI is a collaborative composed of MRBN, THRIVE, The Maine Children's Trauma Response Initiative (MCTRI), and the Community Caring Collaborative (CCC), and was a direct response to MRBN's outreach to our federally funded trauma grantees to collaborate around ACEs and to maximize our resources and coordinate outreach and training.

 Future funding will assist MRBN to document this model and translate the process into technical assistance modules that will be easily transported to other organizations within the State. We anticipate supporting ACEs integration at the organizational level in at least two (2) other organizations in 2015.

*Helping Hands with Heart (HHH)* most recently hosted a day-long Poverty Workshop with Dr. Donna Beegle and is working to integrate efforts around poverty with their ACEs efforts through the Maine Highlands Region (Piscataquis County and portions of Somerset and Penobscot). Professional development sessions provided by HHH for early care and education providers helps them to better meet the needs of the children and families in their care through their understanding of ACEs and the realities and challenges of poverty in their every day lives.

 Future funding will support articulation of the integration of poverty with the ACEs conversations within this Region, which is one of the poorest in the State. This work will focus on cultivating supports for early care providers as they build resilience within the children that they serve as well as their families. This work will occur throughout 2014 and into 2015 prior to statewide distribution in partnership with the "Shared Services" initiative and the Maine Roads to Quality (MRTQ).

*Auburn Public Schools* is working to implement ACEs screening through plannedful parent engagement at least twice a year for children (N=180+/-) in their pre-kindergarten program in order to promote greater parent involvement in their child's education and to promote improved child outcomes. Their goals are to create ways in which teacher/parent partnerships can be cultivated that support each child's successful entry, participation and completion of their pre-kindergarten program.

✍ Future funding will permit MRBN to document this process and create a model initiative that would transport to other school districts to replicate the Auburn efforts. We currently have three (3) school districts who are interested in model replication.

Still other sites such as Southern Kennebec Healthy Start, Community Caring Collaborative (Washington County), Children's Center (Kennebec County), Strengthening Maine Families (statewide), The Community Coalition for Children, Youth and Families (CCCYF) (Androscoggin County) and GEAR Parent Network (statewide) are work to collectively impact parent education and support for parents to better understand the impact of their own ACEs, how they affect their parenting and relationship with their child and to strengthen the understanding of the Protective Factors across the early care and education community.

✍ Future funding will support branding and packaging of a variety of parent-focused initiatives that each build from the same framework and foundation of ACEs, resilience, the Protective Factors, the importance of community in creating healthy children and families, and enhance the preparation and in-service support for early care and education providers particularly in the rural areas of the State.

Various approaches to *Pediatric Screenings* in partnership MRBN are being implemented with Bangor Public Health Nursing and discussed with the Maine Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MAAP). We have talked about approaching Quality Counts to help implement ACEs screening within the well child visits and help to guide integrated follow-up home visiting services. We anticipate that this will expand into child health clinics, hospitals, pediatric and physician offices and early care and development providers including Early Head Start/Head Start, Maine Families and WIC clinics. Leadership for this work is through the MAAP, specifically Bob Holmberg, M.D., and is branching to include collaboration with the Maine Association of Psychiatric Physicians with leadership from Sally Cooper, M.D., integrating with mental health services through Dr. Mark Rains. The work will focus on approaches to ACEs screening, integration into the workflow at a pediatric practice, documentation, referral and support for physicians as well as patients, and the research related to this initiative. There are currently 6-10 pediatric and family practice sites interested in implementing the ACEs screen within the well-child visits.

✍ Future funding for to support pediatric ACEs screenings and follow-up will focus on instrument and professional development and evaluation in several pilot sites, branding and packaging these materials. We hope to partner with Quality Counts to support outreach and implementation of the ACEs screening in a minimum of six (6) sites by the end of 2016, once the initial evaluation of this effort is completed and appropriate modifications are finished.

Statewide efforts are being led by several MRBN sites that are incorporating ACEs awareness and prevention with their members and clients. This multi-dimensional, multi-disciplinary approach to ACEs helps to establish a common language across the various sectors working with very young children.

 Future funding will support continued ACEs Summits statewide, as well as provide a portion of the funds to support multidisciplinary collaboration to host a 1½ day statewide conference with national and local speakers focusing on resilience. This will be an opportunity for MRBN sites to conduct “break-out” sessions about their local initiatives as well as promote awareness about ACEs, skill building around resilience, and continued promotion and engagement of the MRBN mission and goals.

## MRBN Website

Leslie Forstadt, Ph.D., Co-Facilitator of MRBN, faculty from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension, led MRBN's web site development and resource material collection. This site ([www.maineaces.org](http://www.maineaces.org)) went “live” in December 2013. Development was funded from the Communications Committee of the Maine Children’s Growth Council. Pictures of the site are below.



Welcome to the **Maine Resilience Building Network**

HOME ABOUT US RESOURCES MRBN NEAR YOU WHAT ARE ACEs?

  
Maine Resilience Building Network  
Join the Conversation

 Join today!  
How can you  
build resilience  
in your community?

**ACE Study**  
Start a conversation. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

**The Maine Resilience Building Network**  
Here you will find information about the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study and learn more about resilience.



**Resource Toolkit**

Start a conversation. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) can disrupt normal growth and development. The ACE Study found that among adults, the number of early traumatic experiences related to adult illness and well-being.

One of the major sections of the website is the Resource Toolkit, with a growing body of resource materials for users that is neatly organized into a variety of topics and stakeholder groups. Users are able to locate local MRBN sites by clicking on an interactive map.

 Funding for ongoing maintenance and continued development of the web site is essential to the success of MRBN. The site is being used to promote educational offerings, connect the public to resources in their local areas, and will be continually updated with new resources.

## **Promoting Resilience Parent Series**

This curriculum was developed in 2013 by the Children's Center with Mark Rains, PhD. Funding for development was provided by the Maine Children's Trust. The series is a six-week parent education and support curriculum that focuses on learning about one's own ACEs, early brain development, understanding how ACEs affect the parents' relationship with their child(ren) and working with parents on strategies to become "less bothered" by their ACEs through resilience promotion. The curriculum has been piloted and validated and is ready for dissemination. There are currently six (6) local sites interested in replicating this curriculum.

 Funding for this curriculum will develop marketing and packaging of parent curriculum. In addition to these functions, we also want to assist sites as needed in supporting parent participation through child care/transportation vouchers, hospitality, incentives, etc. as well as matching funds to off-set local trainer preparation and teaching reimbursement.

## **ACEs Informational Sessions and Summits**

These educational sessions are the heart of MRBN's outreach and engagement. The target populations for outreach and educational efforts are 1) expectant families, 2) families with children ages 0-8, 3) community partners and 4) legislators. In 2012, a total of 32 sessions were conducted with individuals who had heard of MRBN and wanted to know more about ACEs. Many groups and individuals who experience a session or Summit choose to join MRBN and become part of the collective impact in Maine.

The educational sessions need support and training of speakers. Due to the high demand for these presentations, by the end of 2013, 84 MRBN outreach/engagement sessions were held in addition to five (5) ACEs Summits (Franklin County, AOS 66, Downeast, Penquis and Oxford County). The initial engagement sessions vary in length and content and can be as brief as 45 minutes and as long as 4 hours. Locations have included local Community Action Programs (CAPs), public health, social service agencies, professional organizations (e.g., MACSB, MAAP) public schools, post-secondary institutions, local early childhood collaboratives, business leaders, etc.

The structure of a 3.5 hour Summit includes an introduction to ACEs conducted by Sue Mackey Andrews, and an interactive presentation about resilience that is conducted by Chris Trout, owner of Strengths in Focus. The evaluations from these sessions have been exceptional and there are requests to date for 17 Summits in 2014.

 Funding will enable MRBN to respond to the increasing requests for Summits and educational sessions by supporting a Speaker's Bureau composed of MRBN members trained to conduct the ACEs portion of the Summit, as well as potentially other professional development seminars/modules. The process followed will ensure fidelity to the MRBN mission, philosophy and goals, as well as consistency of information and activities for participants.

The Speaker's Bureau will also free up the Coordinator to provide technical assistance to developing MRBN sites – something that has been sorely lacking but very needed and requested.

Summit participation ranges from 35 to 85 individuals from a variety of stakeholder groups while the smaller outreach/engagement sessions typically are held for 12-35 individuals. A majority of these sessions are requested and hosted by leaders in the local early care and development community and involve partners from education, law enforcement, behavioral health, clergy, mental health, domestic violence and child abuse prevention, etc.

With the exception of the piloting of the Promoting Resilience Parent Support Series and the efforts led by the GEAR Parent MRBN, there has been no targeted effort to engage families in this work. This is a priority area for 2014-2017 through the parent resilience curriculum and expanded parent participation in information sessions and Summits.

MRBN members have conceptualized a series of additional modules to be created in 2014-15 based upon evaluation feedback and member reflections. These include a 3.5 hour “Resilience Skill Building” session which will focus on practitioner skills in promoting resilience in every day relationships and encounters with families, children and community members. We also will be partnering with the Maine Children’s Initiative in curriculum development and delivery in our continued efforts to build partnerships and collaboration across the sectors.



The GEAR Parent Network designed a bookmark card (pictured at left) with the MRBN definition of resilience and its logo, website and initially provided 500 of these cards for member distribution.

These bookmarks are routinely distributed at the ACEs/Resilience Summits and other events and are available through MRBN partners. We are currently in our 2<sup>nd</sup> printing of 5,000 bookmark cards!



Funding will ensure continued reproduction of these cards and other educational materials that can be distributed through all MRBN partners as well as extended outreach to schools, hospitals, and community centers.

## National Recognition

A five-member team from Maine was supported by the Bingham Program to attend the First National ACEs Summit where Maine was showcased in a panel presentation provided by Mackey Andrews. Mark Rains, PhD spoke on another panel about his work on the non-categorical ACEs questionnaire. These presentations and others from the Summit can be accessed at <http://www.instituteforsafefamilies.org/national-summit-presentations>

We learned from attending this Summit in May 2013, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) and Institute for Safe Families (ISF), that Maine is leading the country in strategic and planned implementation of meaningful strategies that are grassroots based.

We learned also that Maine is the only state currently engaged in a statewide ACEs initiative, as well.

Further, the National Coalition on Adversity and Resilience (NCAR), recently spearheaded by ISF and RWJ in December 2013, promises to provide resources, national visibility and validation for the work that the MRBN is doing. Mackey Andrews was selected as the representative from Maine, one of five states participating in this 1 ½ day-long meeting in December 2014 at the RWJ headquarters in Princeton, N.J. The visibility of Maine's ACEs work is gathering followers nationally, and we are frequently asked to speak to other states about our efforts.

This national recognition speaks well to the efforts of MRBN in Maine in creating community conversations and mobilizing citizen leaders in the prevention and early identification of ACEs, emphasizing the promotion of resilience.

**The time is now.** As opportunities for conversation throughout Maine about ACEs increase; awareness grows as does the potential for action throughout the State and at local and regional levels. The Maine Resilience Building Network informs, guides and coordinates collaboration across multiple stakeholder groups and regions throughout Maine. MRBN promotes a common language around ACEs, advances prevention through education, and coordinates efforts statewide that promote this important work while responding to the differences across and within Maine's counties and health regions.

The relatively rapid growth of the MRBN over the last two years is a testimony to the increased interest and awareness of the importance of ACEs in the lives of Maine's young children and their families by communities and a variety of provider groups.

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