



City of San Antonio

Agenda Memorandum

File Number:18-1847

Agenda Item Number: 2.

Agenda Date: 2/13/2018

In Control: Community Health and Equity Committee

DEPARTMENT: Health

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Colleen M. Bridger, MPH, PhD

COUNCIL DISTRICTS IMPACTED: Citywide

SUBJECT:

A briefing on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and public health

SUMMARY:

The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District (Metro Health) will provide a presentation and briefing to the Community Health and Equity Committee on ACEs: what they are, why they matter for public health, and what community leaders can do.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) include child abuse, neglect, and household strife caused by divorce, domestic violence, mental illness, substance abuse or having an incarcerated relative. A 10-question ACE quiz is readily available online. The resulting score, between 0 and 10, is like a cholesterol score for childhood trauma.

At least half of Texans experience at least one ACE. The more ACEs, the greater the odds of:

- Suicide (12x increased odds)
- Alzheimer's (4x increased odds)
- Emphysema (almost 4x increased odds)
- Stroke (more than 2x increased odds)

- Heart disease (more than 2x increased odds)

Without intervention, ACEs have the potential to reduce life expectancy by 20-years.

ACEs cause our bodies to bathe in stress hormones, and these hormones change the architecture of the developing brain. The youngest children, under age 5, are the most vulnerable because the brain is rapidly growing at this time in life-by 3 years old, 80% of the brain's wiring is complete. Toxic stress harms the part of the brain that allows children to focus their attention and prioritize. Toxic stress also causes difficulty with working memory and with our cognitive ability to adjust to new demands and perspectives.

The more ACEs someone accumulates, the higher the chance of unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and substance abuse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has tracked more than 40 health outcomes that demonstrate a dose-response relationship to ACEs (meaning a higher "dose" of ACEs is linked to a worse health outcome).

Additionally, the risk of academic underachievement, mental illness, homelessness and incarceration rise with more ACEs. ACEs broadly affect our education, healthcare, criminal justice and social service systems.

Trauma-induced changes are seen as promising and often reversible by 1) reducing adversity and 2) fostering safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments.

Finally, community leaders can address ACEs in their communities by:

- Raising awareness about ACEs;
- Encouraging people who work with children to screen for ACEs since early detection allows prompt intervention;
- Supporting evidence-based programs that reduce adversity and support caretakers; examples include home visiting nurses, mental healthcare, two-generation interventions, and social work; and,
- Creating safe and connected communities.

ISSUE:

The San Antonio Metropolitan Health District would like the opportunity to brief the Community Health and Equity Committee on ACEs and their relation to public health.

ALTERNATIVES:

This item is for briefing purposes only.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is currently for briefing purposes only.