

Findings from an Evaluation to Inform the Minnesota Department of Health’s ACEs Prevention Grant

In spring 2022, Wilder Research partnered with the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) to learn what Minnesota communities are doing to prevent and address adverse childhood experiences, or PACEs, as well as build resiliency. The evaluation aimed to identify gaps in PACEs and resilience programming across Minnesota, to learn how organizations and practitioners were capturing the impact of their work, and to inform the creation of a statewide dashboard.

Methodology

In collaboration with MDH staff, Wilder Research designed the following instruments and methods specifically for this PACEs evaluation: 1) Key informant interviews with 32 individuals to learn about strategies being used to prevent and address ACEs across the state (i.e., ACEs related data tracking, measuring success, evaluation approaches, and additional resources needed to enhance PACEs efforts). 2) Indicator scan of existing data sources and other documents to create a list PACEs data indicators and progress. 3) Meta-analysis of More Resilient Minnesota documents detailing PACEs efforts (i.e., interview findings, summaries of community discussions, and community-designed strategic plans).

What we learned from evaluation participants	Implications
Evaluation participants detailed a wide range of PACEs strategies, community assets, and cultural contexts across the state to address and meet PACEs needs.	Prioritize relationships, including listening to community members, and helping to create feedback loops between knowledgeable and committed community members and PACEs practitioners.
Evaluation participants highlighted several indicators related to basic needs including addressing food security, housing, transportation, employment, and more as fundamentally important to PACEs work.	In creating a data dashboard, identify more ways to address basic needs in prevention efforts and data infrastructure.
Evaluation participants shared strengths and assets that make individuals, families, and communities more resilient. A focus on protective factors was routinely described as essential for improving future PACEs efforts.	In creating a data dashboard, identify ways to highlight protective factors that promote a strengths-based approach to PACEs efforts and evaluation rather than using a deficits-based framework.
Evaluation participants were eager to come together around PACEs efforts including opportunities for practitioners and community members to gather, share, and learn from one another.	Consider hosting a range of smaller and larger opportunities for PACEs practitioners along with broader community members to learn, to plan, to celebrate and move forward together in PACEs efforts.
Evaluation participants acknowledged the utility of quantitative measures in PACEs work, while also sharing that such measures often feel insufficient in capturing progress or declines with individuals, families, and communities or when assessing the impact of their efforts for reporting or funding purposes.	Include complimentary and/or alternative qualitative ways of storytelling to enable a more holistic way of sharing data and PACEs work.
Evaluation participants expressed feeling overextended when attempting to simultaneously engage in PACEs work and effectively conduct PACEs evaluation.	Consider possibilities for short term, midterm, and/or long term possibilities to supplement a data dashboard with additional tools, technical assistance, and/or workshops for evaluating PACEs efforts.

Operationalizing a PACEs dashboard

Evaluation participants offered insights for how MDH might offer a dashboard useful for community members and to those involved in PACEs programming and evaluation efforts. Evaluation participants suggest that a PACEs dashboard do, or consider the following:

- Provide accessible information about how to access resources and support services.
- List information and protective factors that increase well-being and resilience.
- Offer space to promote community relationships and professional network connections.
- Share individual, organizational, and/or community success stories.
- Include or connect PACEs practitioners to tools, technical assistance, and other general support to assist them in their PACEs efforts.
- Serve as a directory helping to identify and connect those doing or interested in PACEs-related work across the state.
- Track qualitative and quantitative indicators related to communities needs including stagnation, decline, and/or progress for reporting and grant seeking purposes.

Potential next steps for MDH

- Think through a broader dissemination plan that accounts for time and wisdom of the evaluation participants in qualitative and quantitative formats and consider long term additional supports to supplement the data dashboard.
- During the next phase of the evaluation, Wilder and MDH will identify the strategies that most effectively address PACEs, create resources to help communities illustrate the impact of their work, and promote the dashboard and the resources available to support PACEs efforts.

To learn more visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/preventingace-datatoaction.html>

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/ace/index.html>

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Minnesota Efforts to Address, Prevent, and Evaluate Impacts of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)*.

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