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NATIONAL SUMMIT CONVENES IN PHILADLEPHIA TO DISCUSS EFFECTS OF VIOLENCE ON CHILDREN'S LIVES

Philadelphia's Institute for Safe Families Hosts Solution-Based Conference

Philadelphia's Institute for Safe Families, in collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, hosted a National Summit on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on May 13-14 at the Independence Visitor Center. Key summit participants included Dr. Robert Anda, the Principal Investigator of the ACE study, Dr. Andrew Garner one of the authors of a pivotal policy statement from the American Academy of Pediatrics, Dr. Howard Spivak, Director of the Division of Violence Prevention for the Centers for Disease Control, Susan Dreyfus, CEO and President of the Alliance for Children and Families, Dr. Sandra Bloom, Co-Director of the Center for Non-violence and Social Justice and internationally recognized trauma expert and others.

"We are very excited to bring together, foster relationships and share results among national and local leaders committed to using the results of the ACEs study to create a paradigm shift with healthcare, mental health and child-serving systems," said Martha Davis, Executive Director of the Institute for Safe Families.

The Philadelphia Urban ACE study is an effort to capitalize on the findings from the original ACE Study <http://www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm>, which examines a

range of early childhood traumatic stressors and their relationship to clinical, public health, and social problems throughout the lifespan. The key concept underlying the ACE Study is that childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, or growing up with alcohol/substance abuse, mental illness, parental discord, or crime in the home can lead to social, emotional, and cognitive impairments, increased risk of unhealthy behaviors, violence, victimization or re-victimization, disease, disability, and premature mortality. These adverse experiences cause chronic stress that may play a key role in racial and ethnic health disparities.

At the National Summit, the Institute for Safe Families released the results of the Philadelphia Urban ACE Survey, a population based telephone survey of 1,784 Philadelphia residents. The survey is a representative sample of Philadelphia residents conducted to identify the prevalence of ACE and to obtain information about impacted individuals. The Philadelphia Urban ACE Survey was funded by the Institute for Safe Families with generous support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and conducted by the Research and Evaluation Group at Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC).

The survey assessed adverse childhood experiences of urban adults, including psychological, physical and sexual abuse and household dysfunction, such as living with someone who was abusing drugs or illicit substances while they were growing up.

Joel Fein, MD, MPH, Chair of the ISF board, Philadelphia ACE Task Force Co-Chair and a pediatrician at CHOP said: *“This research offers critical insight into the lifetime stressors that Philadelphia families experience and may be more prevalent, if not specific, to urban children; importantly it also offers the opportunity to understand how children succeed and thrive despite less than optimal life circumstances.”*

Selected findings from the Philadelphia Urban ACE Survey are highlighted below.

Prevalence

Previous studies have found that as the frequency of ACEs increases the likelihood of adults experiencing poor health outcomes and health behaviors increases. Overall 37.3% of Philadelphia adults experienced 4 or more ACEs; this represents

approximately 432,100 adults. This rate is higher than what has been found in previous studies looking at ACE scores (<http://www.cdc.gov/ace/prevalence.htm>).

Psychological, Physical, or Sexual Abuse

Approximately one out of three adults ages 18 and older in Philadelphia reported having experienced psychological abuse (33.2%) and 35 percent experienced physical abuse during their childhood at the hands of their parent or another adult who was their caregiver. 16.2% of Philadelphia adults experienced sexual abuse as a child.

Household Dysfunction

More than one out of three adults in Philadelphia grew up in a household with family members who abused alcohol, drugs or other illicit substances (34.8%), one out of four lived in a household with a mentally ill or suicidal family member (24.1%), and one out of ten adults lived with a household member who served time or was sentenced to serve time in a prison, jail or other correctional facility (12.9%).

Community Experiences

Two out of five Philadelphia adults (40.5%) saw or heard violent incidents while growing up (e.g., saw or heard someone being beaten, stabbed, or shot) and more than one out of three (34.5%) reported having experienced discrimination because of their race or ethnicity. Most adults surveyed reported that they felt the neighborhoods in which they grew up in were safe (85.4%), more than three out of four adults (77.5%) thought their neighbors looked out, supported, and trusted each other, and 92.3% reported that someone made them feel special while growing up.

Methodology

The Philadelphia Urban ACE Survey re-contacted Philadelphia residents, ages 18 years and older, who participated in the Southeastern Pennsylvania Household Health Survey (SEPA HHS) a dual frame random digit dial telephone survey that included 3,676 households in Philadelphia. Interviews for the Philadelphia Urban ACE Survey were conducted in English and Spanish, and used both landlines and cellphone telephone

lines. The survey was fielded between November 9, 2012 and January 22, 2013. Survey data were demographically weight-adjusted to be representative of the Philadelphia population. The response rate for the Philadelphia Urban Ace Survey is 67.1%. Survey development was guided by the Philadelphia Adverse Childhood Experiences Task Force, a collaboration and partnership between practitioners and public health leaders led by the Institute for Safe Families.

In addition to showcasing local work, the National Summit encouraged a national dialogue on ACEs, trauma, toxic stress and resilience in children's lives, with a solution and action-based focus. Summit participants discussed the emerging developmental science and the research, policy, and practice findings of the ACEs work. Thought leaders, practitioners, and key stakeholders from around the country will make recommendations for comprehensive public health approaches about how to expand and scale this work in a variety of urban, suburban and rural settings, utilizing clinical and community strategies.

The Institute for Safe Families is a non-profit organization whose mission is to prevent family violence and child abuse by strengthening families to create nurturing, healthy environments that promote children's positive development. ISF sponsors community events and educational forums to raise awareness about the effects violence has on the family and community. For over 20 years ISF has been an incubator for new ideas, developed innovative programming and convened forums for cross-systems dialogue and collaboration aimed at building capacity for more effective prevention and response to all forms of interpersonal violence.

For further information about the National Summit on Adverse Childhood Experiences or Institute for Safe Families, call 215-843-2046