



The East San Jose PEACE Partnership

Cultivating resilience to address Adverse Community
Experiences in an Accountable Community for Health

Photo credit: Andrea Flores Shelton

The East San Jose PEACE Partnership integrates racial and health equity principles into violence prevention, including community building events. Children of the Rainbow Park, San Jose, 2017

A resilient community organizing for health and peace

The East San Jose PEACE (Prevention Efforts Advance Community Equity) Partnership is a group of residents and organizations working to build a healthy, peaceful and empowered community by preventing and addressing violence and trauma that affects youth, families and the community. East San Jose is a racially diverse, working-class community of 175,000 residents within the city of San Jose, California, with a mix of distressed and prospering neighborhoods. East San Jose residents experience more violence, such as community violence and intimate partner violence, than elsewhere in San Jose and Santa Clara County, and have higher rates of hospitalizations due to assaults and firearm injuries. The community's history of isolation from opportunity through residential segregation, poor infrastructure planning and development, and freeways

"In spite of adverse community experiences, the people of East San Jose continue to build on their resilience and assets and forge new narratives for peace and prosperity."

— Andrea Flores-Shelton, East San Jose resident and former staff at the Santa Clara County Health Department

cutting through the neighborhoods has shaped the community conditions that contribute to these higher rates of violence. East San Jose also has many strengths and assets, including strong schools, arts and culture, the Mexican Heritage Plaza, many different faith centers, and influential community empowerment organizations, like Somos Mayfair. As well, East San Jose has a deep history of partnerships, initiatives, and relationships among community organizations and local government. In recent years, displacement of existing residents has become a growing concern, as population growth in the Silicon Valley region and lack of affordable housing stock have contributed to exorbitant rent increases.

In recognition of these challenges and building on assets, the PEACE Partnership formed as an Accountable Community for Health (ACH).

The Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework guides the PEACE Plan

As a demonstration site participating in the California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative (CACHI), the PEACE Partnership adopted the ACH model and set out to develop a plan for governance, interventions, evaluation, financing and sustainability, communications, and more. Prevention Institute's *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience (ACE|R) Framework* served as a key framework for the plan. The ACE|R Framework helped the PEACE Partnership name the roots of violence and trauma and their community-wide multigenerational impact. According to Andrea Flores-Shelton, an East San Jose resident and former staff with the Santa Clara County Health Department, "It hasn't been an easy conversation. But the ACE|R framework has given us a shared understanding and language about structural violence and how the community environment has historically impacted our communities – and how that persists." As a direct consequence, the PEACE Plan focused on solutions that will, according to Andrea, "Shift from a one child at a time service delivery approach, to a comprehensive upstream strategy that is attempting to put residents at the front, center, and back." Insights and recommendations from the ACE|R framework informed major components of the plan:

Leadership and governance: ACE|R acknowledges that structural factors and community trauma can strain and weaken a community's social fabric, and promotes community agency as an integral element of community healing and resilience. The PEACE Partnership planning process began with deep attention to governance and emphasis on resident leadership, social inclusion, and transparency, to counter systemic inequities that have disenfranchised residents within the larger political and economic systems shaping the neighborhoods, city, and region. One-third of the Leadership Team is comprised of residents, and all work groups include residents. Government, healthcare, and business

An Accountable Community for Health

is a multisector alliance serving a particular geographic area to improve community health and reduce disparities through sustained investments while aiming to reduce costs to health care and other sectors.

The California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative was established to lead efforts to modernize California's health system and build a healthier state by transforming the health of entire communities, not just individual patients. The initiative is funded by The California Endowment, Kaiser Permanente, Blue Shield of California Foundation, and Sierra Health Foundation.

sector representatives, several of whom are residents, sit at the table with community-based organizations, neighborhood associations, and other residents to share decision-making power and build collective capacity to effect change.

Financing and sustainability: ACE|R recognizes that structural factors and violence contribute to disinvestment in certain communities, and that symptoms of community trauma can further exacerbate economic disadvantage. By weaving together a variety of funding streams and financing approaches through a Wellness Fund (a core component of the ACH model) to invest in violence and trauma prevention and sustain the PEACE Partnership, the initiative is promoting economic investment and stability at the neighborhood level.

Interventions: ACE|R names the community environment as an actionable place for healing and resilience, and recommends strategies to strengthen sociocultural ("people"), built/physical ("place"), and economic/educational ("equitable opportunity") factors at the community level, particularly in a manner that is culturally rooted, promotes community healing, and pushes back on structural violence. Along these lines, the PEACE Partnership prioritized several synergistic interventions that support youth leaders, community action teams, peer health educators, men and boys networks, and family resource centers in promoting



positive norms and culture, social cohesion, and healing through dialogues, peer education, and collective action. For example, youth leaders and community action teams will enhance the youth center, community center, and other public spaces to promote social connectedness, shared trust, and willingness to act for the benefit of the community. Further, an anti-displacement policy group will develop and advocate for policies and practices to protect existing residents' housing stability and social and cultural support networks.

Communications: ACE|R has also informed the PEACE Partnership's communications strategy.

Andrea shares, "The landscape is dominated by negative stories. But who is really telling the stories? We are flipping that dialogue, changing the narrator and the narrative,

sharing stories from the community, remembering that our lived experiences and our cultural roots are our strengths." This approach, including activities such as story sharing and video making, will: influence how residents, business leaders, and elected leaders understand violence, race, and health equity; and cultivate a shared narrative about peace, community, and resilience.

Weaving relationship, process, and impact for resilience and peace

The PEACE Partnership has multiple components and is seeking to promote health, equity, and safety through a number of sophisticated strategies and approaches, from distributing leadership to building a business case for violence prevention. At the heart of the work is a skillful balance of relationship, process, and impact – all in the service of building peace. Andrea describes this practice: "The PEACE Partnership is moving an agenda and meeting deliverables and milestones while really ensuring that there's trust among the people sitting at the table. That's the only way we're going to move from the traditional, transactional approach to a transformative approach that will truly make the changes that we're hoping for our community." Reducing violence and trauma is just the first step. By focusing on healing community trauma and building community resilience, the PEACE Partnership is not only transforming its approach to violence and trauma, it is also building a legacy for improving the health and wellbeing of East San Jose residents for many years and generations to come.

Authorship & Resources

ABOUT PREVENTION INSTITUTE

Prevention Institute is a nonprofit, national center dedicated to improving community health and wellbeing by building momentum for effective primary prevention. Primary prevention means taking action to build resilience and to prevent problems before they occur. The Institute's work is characterized by a strong commitment to community participation and promotion of equitable health outcomes among all social and economic groups. Since its founding in 1997, the organization has focused on community prevention, injury and violence prevention, health equity, healthy eating and active living, positive youth development, health system transformation, and mental health and wellbeing. For more information, visit www.preventioninstitute.org.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

More information about the East San Jose PEACE Partnership can be found at cachi.org/profiles/santa-clara-county.

More information about the California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative can be found at www.cachi.org.

Prevention Institute's report, [Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: A Framework for Addressing and Preventing Community Trauma](#), provides a groundbreaking framework for understanding the relationship between community trauma and violence.

Funded by Kaiser Permanente Community Benefit in Northern California, and based on interviews with practitioners in communities with high rates of violence, the report outlines specific strategies to address and prevent community trauma – and foster resilience – using techniques from those living in affected areas. For additional information and resources on addressing community trauma, go to our [project page](#).

Since the initial development of the *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework* in 2016, multiple networks and communities have shared it, as well as adopted, adapted and/or implemented it to address and prevent community trauma. *Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience: Learning from Practice* reflects valuable lessons from their practice.

What? Why? How? Answers to Frequently Asked Questions About the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework builds off of core concepts in the Adverse Community Experiences and Resilience Framework and addresses questions that have emerged in early practice and implementation.

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