

## **Youth Resiliency Committee**

A Sub-Committee of the Los Alamos Community Health Council

Collaborating to Build an Engaged, Connected, and Thriving Community

**Vision:** We envision a community where all youth are connected, engaged, and resilient.

**Mission:** We support youth and family well-being by bringing awareness to strengths and challenges; connecting people, ideas, and resources; and promoting services and activities in our local and neighboring communities.

May 10, 2021

**Welcome and Share** – present - Christal Salazar (LAPD Victim Advocate), Tara Adams (JJAB Family Resource Specialist), Morrie Pongratz (JJAB, CHC, Kiwanis, Key Club, LAPS Foundation), Ali Harper (FSN Resource Center, CASA Volunteer, Global Hydranencephaly Foundation Executive Director), Don Casperson (Kiwanis Club and LAPS Foundation), Deni Fell (Los Alamos County Social Services Department Case Coordination Specialist), George Marsden (YMCA Los Alamos Teen Center Director), Danielle Sutherland (JJAB Facilitator), Diana Martinez (Los Alamos Family YMCA Development Director), Mary Beth Bloser (Health and Wellness Coach), Bailey Martinez (Youth Activity Center Site Director), Jenny McCumber (LAPS Foundation Executive Director), Desaree Jimenez (LA Cooperative Extension Service), Felicity Fonseca (Los Alamos County Library System Community Engagement Librarian), Kim Ferguson (Hope Pregnancy Center), Bob Dryja (Amatuer Naturalist Column LA Daily Post, Retirement Committee, Faith and Science Forum, Historical Advisory Council, CHC), Brandi Seekins (LAPS Prevention Support Specialist), Kristine Coblentz (LAPS Healthy Schools Initiative)

**Skill Check** - Mental Health Awareness Month/ Celebrations and Transitions

As we begin to reenter in person interactions, it can be helpful to keep The Four Agreements from Don Miguel Ruiz in mind: 1. Don't Take Anything Personally 2. Speak Impeccably with Your Words 3. Don't Make Assumptions 4. Always Do Your Best

Suggestions for Greetings/ Checking In - use open ended questions, make time to listen, avoid assumptions - this year has been tough on many but also a relief from pressure/ expectations/ anxiety for others

“It's been such a strange year....how are you doing?”

“I have been thinking about you and wondering how you are. It's so good to see you!”

“I've noticed you seem different lately. Is there something you'd like to talk about?”

“Let's make time to catch up. I'd love to hear how you're doing.”

Suggestions for Celebrations and Transitions - avoid making assumptions and raise awareness of the different pathways and definitions of success

“What's next?”

“What's next in your adventure?”

“How are you planning to celebrate this milestone?”

“How are you feeling about this transition?”

## Resilience Discussion – Tara Adams

### How are we defining resilience?

A more nuanced definition by Steven M. Southwick et al [here](#) suggests that we see resilience as more than a trait or a binary concept, but as a complex phenomenon that exists along a continuum perhaps in differing degrees across multiple domains and changeable over time. In the same panel discourse, Dr. Ann Masten refers to resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully” and Dr. Rachel Yahuda asserts that “trauma survivors who develop PTSD may be just as resilient as trauma survivors who don't develop PTSD”. It is important to recognize that our definition of resilience can reflect our own assumptions and biases.

What resilience is NOT - achievement, compliance, moral superiority, absence of life challenges or struggles.

Recognize that our experiences shape us.

Build on strengths and the ability to engage in adaptive behaviors, strengthen connections, become trauma informed, recognize that language matters.

### Brief Review/ Intro to Trauma Informed Practices - Ali Harper

Everyone experiences some degree of stress - chronic stress is sustained over time and is damaging to the brain and body especially during child development.

[ACE's](#) are common, 10 categories of household dysfunction related to physical and emotional abuse in the original study - most people have at least one, ACE's tend to occur in clusters Higher ACE scores lead to negative health outcomes including the 5 leading causes of death in adults

Youth who have experienced ACE's have an increased risk of negative consequences, physical and emotional health outcomes, and risk behaviors

There is no strict rule for what is traumatic for an individual - triggers and responses are also subjective

Trauma stays with us in our bodies and our implicit memory

Being aware of the prevalence of trauma and seeing how it can show up in behavior from a compassionate perspective can help

Recognize the tendency to misinterpret behaviors that may have been/ are survival strategies Best Practices - build protective factors, develop close relationships with at least one caring adult, support parents, caregivers and mentors, help youth cultivate a sense of purpose and identity, strengthen individual competencies, and offer opportunities for social connection

### Informal Review of Types of Trauma Occurring in our Community - Tara Adams

ACEs Known to JJAB RS's	Number of Cases (135 Total Cases)	Percent Affected
Verbal or Emotional Abuse	17	12.6%
Physical Abuse	16	11.9%

Sexual Abuse	8	5.9%
Emotional Neglect	20	14.8%
Physical Neglect	26	19.3%
Domestic Violence	28	20.7%
Substance Misuse Caretaker	35	25.9%
Mental Illness Caretaker	26	19.3%
Incarcerated Parent	7	5.2%
Separation or Divorce	62	45.9%
CYFD Involvement	32	23.7%

**What could building a more resilient community look like?**

Programs and Interventions that are relevant to and accessible by all community members

A developed and accessible spectrum of supports not one size fits all

Awareness of the spectrum of experiences and perspectives of all community members

Awareness of effects of historical and ongoing trauma

A coordinated approach starting with a few foundational concepts - distributing info and offering training to partner organizations

**Takeaways:**

Be curious about behavior and the message it is sending, the potential unmet need, recognize that behaviors and traits may have been developed as successful survival strategies

Keep our eyes on all students and families - reduce the false sense of immunity that is common in this community

Look at the whole span of the community and what needs are there

Avoid making assumptions about who is struggling, doing fine

Recognize that most people have experienced big "T's" and little "t's"

Recognize that for some community members trauma is ongoing

Develop help seeking skills and knowledge of where and how to access help

Identify and remove barriers to services and supports

Need to create safe, supportive, welcoming spaces for adults to share challenges and build skills

Continue to reduce stigma and fears, break down culture of secrecy

Important to gather youth perspective/ feedback during this process - take some focus group questions to locations/times/spaces that are comfortable and accessible to youth

Consider how twice exceptional youth experience trauma, how high rates of autism and anxiety may contribute to challenges that may be unique to Los Alamos

Learn more about current youth experience and possible desensitization to trauma and how that can work both or either pro/ against healthy functioning.

Honor that being labeled resilient is not necessarily a compliment when you have been systemically subjected to untenable life circumstances and conditions.

### **What are the lenses/perspectives we need to include?**

- Trauma Informed Practices
- Equity and Social Justice
- Social Emotional Competencies
- Restorative Communication Skills
- Asset-Based Thinking
- Collective Impact vs. Collaboration
- Gaps and Barriers
- Others?

For June: As a community committee, where are we? Where do we want to be? How are we going to get there? Is this reflected in our mission, vision, tagline?

### **Resources**

[Springtime Loving Kindness Mindfulness Breaks](#) - May 12, 19, 26, June 2

[Self-Care Template](#) - inventorying areas where we have and may be in need of support

[Your Turn: How to be an Adult](#) by Julie Lythcott-Haims (author of How to Raise an Adult) offers compassion, personal experience, and practical strategies for living a more authentic adulthood, as well as inspiration through interviews with dozens of voices from the rich diversity of the human population who have successfully launched their adult lives.

[Tiger Eyes](#) by Judy Blume - story of adolescence and loss set in Los Alamos

[The Body Keeps the Score](#) by Bessel van der Kolk - understanding and treating traumatic stress

[Parenting from the Inside Out](#) by Dan Siegel and Mary Hartzell guides parents through creating the necessary foundations for loving and secure relationships with their children.

[Peaceful Parent](#) Drop In Classes - learn practical strategies and connect with other parents - groups will continue in the fall - contact Brandi Seekins at [b.seekins@laschools.net](mailto:b.seekins@laschools.net)

[One Circle](#) Groups - structured opportunities for youth and perhaps adults to find connection and build skills in a facilitated format - contact Coordinator Luke Eigelbach

([luke@losalamosjjob.com](mailto:luke@losalamosjjob.com)) and Facilitator Danielle Sutherland ([danielles@losalamosjjob.com](mailto:danielles@losalamosjjob.com)) with ideas or referrals

[SENG Parent Groups](#) provide support to parents of gifted and twice exceptional children with a strong focus on healthy communication. Contact Mary Bloser at [marybethbloser@gmail.com](mailto:marybethbloser@gmail.com) for more info - a new group may start in the next month or two.

[Trauma Informed Parenting Series](#) at FSN will begin again in the fall facilitated by Ali Harper

### **Upcoming Opportunities for Collaboration/ Engagement –**

NM PED High School Student Summer Internship Program - contact [donna.casados@lacnm.us](mailto:donna.casados@lacnm.us)

LAMS Student [Supply Drive for the Homeless](#) - May 8, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm

[Trauma's Influence and a Child's Potential](#) workshop series by Dr. Layne Kalbfleisch (educational psychology, neuroscience, specializes in twice exceptional clients) – May 12, June 9, July 7

May - Mental Health Awareness Month – [Take the Positivity Pledge](#)

June - [Forward@14](#) virtual workshops and resource fair for youths with disabilities and their parent, guardian or other family member - June 5 and 12, 10 am - 4 pm

**Next meeting – June 14, 2021, 9:30 - 11:00 am at Los Alamos Teen Center!**