

Research Practice

LSUHSC School of Public Health

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The Louisiana ACE Educator Program: Building community awareness around ACEs, trauma, and resilience science across the state of Louisiana

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ACEs, Adverse Childhood Experiences, is the term used to describe all types of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic childhood experiences (1). ACEs were first documented in research within a large study population during the ACE Study, which took place from 1995 to 1997 in San Diego, CA and included roughly 17,000 participants (1). This landmark ACE study linked the short and long-term effects of these early experiences of trauma and adversity to long-term social and health problems. The measured ACEs included neglect; physical, emotional, or sexual abuse; exposure to violence; mental illness, incarceration, or substance abuse in the family; parental absence (due to divorce/separation); and low economic status (2).

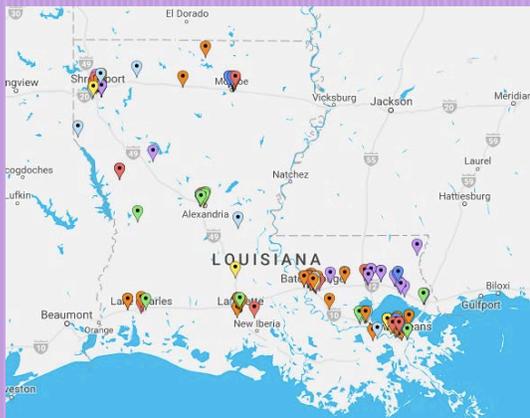
Helen completed her practice experience last semester at The Louisiana ACE Educator Program located in the Bureau of Family Health. The Louisiana ACE Educator Program has over 50 volunteer ACE Educators who regularly present in-depth lectures about the neuroscience of childhood adversity, the ACE Study, and how communities can address ACEs and build resilience. All

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presentation materials used by the program were developed by Dr. Robert Anda, who was a co-principal investigator on the ACE Study and Laura Porter who is the Director of ACE Partnerships in Washington State. As the program intern, Helen helped to analyze the program reach by geography and audience sector and generated a map of this reach to display areas of saturation and gaps in knowledge proliferation. Additionally- she created a directory of relevant research related to ACEs-adjacent topics (positive-parenting, neurobiology, etc.) and helped to develop materials for dissemination at presentations, events, and for recurring communication. As a part of her internship, Helen also had the opportunity to attend statewide meetings with child-serving organizations invested in ACE awareness.

REFERENCES:

1. Felitti VJ(1), Anda RF, Nordenberg D, Williamson DF, Spitz AM, Edwards V, Koss MP, Marks JS. (1998 May). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *Am J Prev Med.*;14(4):245-58.
2. Ortiz, R., & Sibinga, E. M. (2017). The Role of Mindfulness in Reducing the Adverse Effects of Childhood Stress and Trauma. *Children*, 4(3), 16. <http://doi.org/10.3390/children4030016>

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: The Louisiana ACE Educator Program seeks to build community awareness around ACEs, trauma, and resilience science using the network of well-informed trained educators. The increase in understanding of the lifelong impacts of ACEs will help to improve policies and practices across the state to support affected individuals.

EDITOR'S NOTE: While we consider mental health implications for patients, we do not always consider the gap in knowledge as it relates to public health. Helen's work has shown that ACEs education and awareness intends to reach many others areas in Louisiana.



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Helen Lindau is a second year MPH student in the Behavioral and Community Health Sciences program. She is originally from North Carolina and has been in New Orleans for 5 years. Before starting her Masters at LSUHSC, Helen worked at a transitional home called Eden House for women leaving lives of violence, addiction, prostitution, and life on the streets. It was at Eden House where she first became interested in Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).