WEAVING A WEB OF RESILIENCE

We all live, work, and play within the context of our communities. Strong communities keep us safe and healthy. They support meaningful relationships, provide opportunities for learning, and buffer us against adversity.

Strong communities are also resilient—they help us bounce back after something bad happens.

Resilience can take the form of a child getting up after a fall. People recovering from substance abuse and getting great jobs. Families coping and moving on from the loss of a loved one. Communities rebuilding their infrastructure after a disaster.

Working together, we can take steps to support the resilience of children, adults, and the community as a whole. We can address ongoing problems like poverty, racism, and violence. We can reduce the likelihood that children will end up homeless or using drugs.

The power to make change already exists in each of us and in our communities. Every resident, group, and organization has a unique contribution to make.

“The neighborhood is a treasure chest. By opening the chest and putting the gifts together in many different ways, we multiply the power of its riches.”

— John McKnight and Peter Block (2012)

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For more information on resilience, visit www.samhsa.gov.
“Nobody can do everything, but everyone can do something.”
—Anonymous

GETTING STRONGER TOGETHER

Steps to Individual Resilience
Five steps to build resilience in yourself and others:
1) Foster hope
2) Act with purpose
3) Connect with others
4) Take care of yourself
5) Search for meaning

Steps to Community Resilience
Five steps to build resilience in your community:
1) Take immediate action and plan for the future
2) Involve the whole community
3) Communicate risks
4) Share information
5) Track your progress toward resilience

SUPPORTING YOUTH RESILIENCE

The more risks youth face, the more services they use. But more services do not always lead to better outcomes. Positive outcomes result when youth have good experiences with services. Positive experiences result from respect, integrating youth voices, validation, encouragement, empowerment, honesty, fairness, and open communication.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES


Dalhousie University, Resilience Research Centre. (2013). Supporting youth resilience [Video]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=od5a20mXDw4


A COMMUNITY WORKING TOGETHER

Building a resilient community involves a variety of partners. It is important to establish trust and mutuality, stay open to new ideas, and make a place at the table for everyone. Great things happen when people and organizations work in partnership. More information can be found in the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s “Guide for Developing Resilient, Adversity-Informed Communities.”
When a child experiences adversity—particularly without supports—they are more likely to drop out of school, start using drugs and alcohol, and get in trouble with the law. When they grow up, they are more likely to have problems with jobs and relationships. Police, juvenile and adult corrections, and courts all can play an important role in prevention and early intervention.

These providers see the consequences of violence and adversity every day. They can be particularly effective as partners and consultants to other community organizations. Police, judges, teachers, and health care professionals can help prevent problems by working collaboratively with behavioral health and social service providers.

Employee substance abuse costs millions of dollars every year in lateness and absences, health care costs, and workers’ compensation. Workplaces also may be affected by domestic violence and bullying. Local business leaders have a stake in creating resilient communities, and are important allies.

Churches, synagogues, mosques, interfaith councils, and other religious organizations are the backbone of many communities. They provide fellowship, concrete assistance, moral grounding, and spiritual leadership to millions of Americans. Local faith leaders are often the first place people turn for help when they are suffering. Faith communities can be a strong partner in preventing and responding to a variety of social problems.

People Come Together to Plan and Implement Community Change

Who can get us started? Anyone! A concerned resident, someone from a local agency, a community leader.

Who should be involved? Everyone who wants to make a difference! We can all be part of the solution.

What should we do first? Start a conversation! For some ideas, see the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s “Guide for Developing Resilient, Adversity-Informed Communities.”
The following hyperlinked examples will give you some ideas about what is possible in your community. A more extensive list of evidence-based programs can be found in the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention’s “Understanding and Addressing Adversity as a Risk Factor for Substance Abuse in Young People” publication, and at SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.

COMMUNITY COALITIONS
Community Prevention Partnership of Berks County. A community coalition in Pennsylvania weaves substance abuse prevention efforts into a larger framework for addressing adversity.

Community Resilience Cookbook. Communities across the country come together to build healthier, more resilient communities.

BUSINESS COMMUNITY
Healthy KC. The Greater Kansas City Chamber of Commerce partners with Blue Cross Blue Shield to promote prevention, trauma-informed approaches, and behavioral health as part of a healthy community.

What’s Good for Health is Good for Business. The Prevention Institute has developed a helpful guide for engaging the business community in prevention efforts.

COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND GROUPS
Big Brothers Big Sisters of America. Young people are paired with an adult volunteer who serves as a mentor. The program builds confidence and positive behavior, and reduces the likelihood of drug and alcohol use.

Recover Project. This project focuses on peer-to-peer support for individuals and families affected by addiction in western Massachusetts.

EDUCATION
PAX Good Behavior Game. This game teaches students to focus, work toward valued goals, cooperate with each other, and self-regulate. It helps protect students against lifetime mental, emotional, behavioral, and related physical illnesses.


Massachusetts Recovery High Schools. This effort provides safe, sober, and supportive school environments in which youth in recovery can develop the skills and strengths needed for personal, academic, vocational, and community success.

FAITH COMMUNITIES
SAMHSA’s Center for Faith-Based and Community Partnerships. This Center provides resources to faith communities that want to help develop resilience.

Children, Violence, and Trauma: Community-Based Approaches. The Office of Justice Programs highlights how faith-based groups in South Carolina, Michigan, and Oregon are taking leadership in supporting resilient families and children.
HEALTH CARE

Center for Pediatric Traumatic Stress. The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia provides resources for health care providers and families with children who have experienced traumatic stress.

The Health Center at Lincoln. A health center within a high school for at-risk youth provides much needed health, substance abuse, and mental health prevention and treatment services.

Nurse-Family Partnership. The partnership works to reach low-income women who are pregnant with their first child. It emphasizes prenatal care, positive parenting, and improved opportunities for mothers.

MENTAL HEALTH/SUBSTANCE ABUSE/SOCIAL SERVICES

Recovery Coach Program. The program provides recovery coaches for families who have temporarily lost custody of their children due to substance abuse.

Carolina Abecedarian Project. Young children living with poverty and other risk factors receive center-based child care with developmentally appropriate activities designed to improve language, cognition, and adaptive behavior. The program aims to reduce adult substance use and enhance academic achievement.

ENDNOTES

3 Dalhousie University, Resilience Research Centre. (2013). The Pathways to Resilience Research Project: How service providers can support at-risk youth [Video]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0p0_wgQL6oM