

Rachael Jameson

M.P.H. Candidate, Health Policy Track

rachael.c.jameson@vanderbilt.edu

Practicum Site: Tennessee Department of Health

Practicum Site Supervisor: JW Randolph, M.P.H.

A toolkit to address Adverse Childhood Experiences in Tennessee Communities

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Introduction: This practicum was based in the Office of Strategic initiatives (OSI) at the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH). Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are a growing public health crisis that negatively impact children and have been linked to chronic health conditions, risky health behaviors, and even early death. The Tennessee Young Child Wellness Council and TDH found that 52% of Tennessee's population has experienced at least one ACE and 21% has experienced three or more. Every county in Tennessee has a County Health Council (CHC) that is responsible for conducting county health assessments to determine and action plans to address shared community priorities. Many CHCs have established ACEs as a top priority. The overall goal of this practicum was to develop an educational toolkit to assist CHCs as they create plans for their communities.

Methods: To develop the toolkit, an extensive review of current literature and resources on ACEs was conducted. Existing resources from the OSI and Tennessee's Building Strong Brains Initiative were reviewed for inclusion.

Results: More awareness and useful resources to better equip communities to efficiently address ACEs are needed. The toolkit contains the latest information on ACEs and worksheets that can help guide valuable conversations around ACEs and create community action plans to address them. To support this initiative, the OSI plans to distribute this toolkit to councils that have identified ACEs as one of their priorities.

Conclusions: CHCs can help increase awareness about and facilitate impactful actions to respond to and prevent ACEs in Tennessee communities. In today's environment there are many challenges around the wording of scientific information and public health recommendations for large diverse audiences focused on AECs education. This practicum taught many lessons about public health messaging and communication and highlighted the importance of addressing public health issues on a state and local level.

