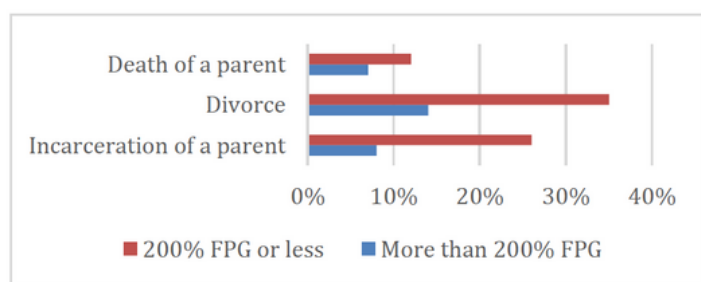


The Greater Cincinnati Tristate Region Core Team

Joining Forces for Children (JfFC), the regional initiative participating in CCR's BCR network, is spearheaded by The Mayerson Center for Safe and Healthy Children at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center and spans multiple counties in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana. JfFC includes over 50 organizations and 600 members from school systems, social service agencies, medical providers, parenting support organizations, early childhood professionals, home visitation services, and many other stakeholders. Our partnership with the Center for Community Resilience (CCR) strengthens our platform to improve child health and wellness outcomes across the Greater Cincinnati tristate region.

The Community Context

Children, families, and communities in the Greater Cincinnati region face many challenges that increase the likelihood of negative health and other life outcomes. For example, Black women in Cincinnati have limited economic opportunity due to systemic factors such as low wages and limited access to affordable childcare. Cincinnati children experience neighborhood violence or have had an incarcerated parent at more than double the national averages, according to 2016 National Survey for Children's Health data. Cincinnati also has one of the highest child poverty rates in the nation. The 2017 Child Well-Being Survey (CWBS) found that in our region, these adverse experiences are more common in households earning less than 200% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG).



The Ohio Valley is also ground-zero for the nation's opioid epidemic, which has taken an unprecedented toll on families, communities, and the region's major systems, from mental health and substance abuse programming to education, foster care, and public safety. While these challenges exist, Greater Cincinnati also has many essential strengths and assets that the local CCR coalition is lifting up and building upon. These include increased investments at state and local levels for trauma-informed systems building, a heightened focus on family-centered solution designs, and strong community driven focus on multi-generational approaches to build resilient families.

What is Building Community Resilience?

Building Community Resilience (BCR) is a national network and learning collaborative that seeks to improve the health and life outcomes of children, families, and communities. Teams in six regions across the country are using the BCR process and tools to help their communities not only 'bounce back' in the face of adversity, but bounce forward. Since 2017, BCR teams have helped build and strengthen the buffers that can prevent negative outcomes associated with adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), particularly in the context of adverse community environments (ACEs)—the Pair of ACEs.

Using the BCR process and tools, teams work to align large systems with one another—such as health care, city government, and education—and also with community-based partners, including parenting support services and grassroots health advocacy. Teams also develop strategies – from implementing trauma-informed practices to data sharing and advocating for policy change – that bolster strengths, fill gaps, and ultimately build child, family, and community resilience. Teams identify community strengths and gaps, work in partnership with community not on community, develop a shared understanding of adversities and goals, and identify concrete policy asks to pursue. The teams use CCR's free and publicly available tools and resources—including the [Pair of ACEs and Resilience Trees](#), [Communications & Coalition-Building Guide](#), and [Fostering Equity Guide](#)—to implement their work.

BCR is led by the Center for Community Resilience (CCR) at the George Washington University's Milken Institute School of Public Health. CCR provides technical assistance, including strategic planning, facilitation of cross-sector information sharing, support for data and measurement, development of policy strategies, convening, and communications support.

Adapting & Growing with CCR

In 2015, JFfC developed a five-year strategic plan that “incorporates the concepts involved in adversity reduction as well as resilience building within families.” An essential component of the work is expanding implementation of trauma-informed approaches to individuals and systems that interact with children and families. Adopting trauma-informed practices involves understanding, recognizing, and responding sensitively to experiences of trauma, which include individual and community adversities such as exposure to abuse, parental incarceration or mental health issues, poverty, violence, and community disruption. With the support of CCR staff, JFfC has used the CCR platform to increase our local and national advocacy.

Our work has evolved to focus on four key areas, or channels. Within each channel, activities raise awareness, provide trainings around the Pair of ACEs and their impact on child health and other outcomes, encourage adoption of trauma-informed practices, expand screening for exposure to ACEs in children and parents, and develop policies to create trauma-informed communities.

- The **Early Childhood Channel** focuses on children younger than 8 years old and their families. Efforts include building awareness with early childhood professionals, caregivers, and parents on the impact of the Pair of ACEs on child development and wellness in order to prevent the negative effects of toxic stress exposure on children and promote protective factors that build resilient children and families. The Early Childhood Channel is spreading its workplace intervention that enhances the awareness of childcare staff and parents about childhood adverse experiences and how to build child and family resilience to improve outcomes. The channel also has very popular “5 Ways to Build Resilience” tip sheets for families and community members.
- The **School Age Channel** focuses on children between 5-18 years old. Efforts include creating safe school and after school environments where all faculty & staff understand that teaching and responding to students in a trauma-informed manner will ultimately promote family wellness as well as academic and social-emotional growth. The channel co-created a systems change road map that captured the wisdom and experience of the many groups around the table who are implementing trauma responsive care and prevention models within their systems. We have also created a free, four-hour online training for educators and supportive adults to bridge the gap between the science of adversity and implementation in the school, after-school, or community based program.
- The **Health Care Channel** focuses on patients (child and parent) and healthcare providers. Efforts include educating providers and other healthcare staff about methods to screen and identify the patient’s exposure to the Pair of ACEs, and taking steps to reduce exposure to adversities that can worsen health and other outcomes. Work includes a logic model for launching trauma-informed care initiatives within a hospital setting to promote an optimal healing environment. New division specific research and continuous quality improvement projects on hospital based trauma informed care are emerging to support the strategies outlined within the logic model, and hospital-wide trauma informed training is now available.
- **Community Movement Building** focuses on awareness and knowledge building for anyone in our community interested in connecting with JFfC and learning more about ACEs, toxic stress, and building resilience. JFfC partners with Community Trauma Ambassadors to spread knowledge, create shared understanding about the roots of adversity and inequity, and to implement supports for community youth and neighbors who have experienced trauma.

Cincinnati Truth & Equity Initiative

In October 2020, the Center for Community Resilience (CCR) mobilized the Cincinnati BCR network and partners from the healthcare, arts, academia, culture, education, business, and philanthropic sectors to implement a [process of Truth & Equity](#) that would build political will to dismantle levers of structural racism and foster racial equity in the region. Together, this coalition implemented historical education, advocacy training, and community leadership development to strengthen individual and organizational capacity to foster racial equity across all the city’s sectors. The initiative was informed by and grounded in the voices of community members through a series of engagement activities including community conversations, racial healing circles, leadership development opportunities, and a [full-length documentary](#) that collected and uplifted stories from those most impacted. The 18-month effort yielded a community-driven policy agenda that included priorities such as economic mobility for Black women and closing the racial wealth gap using small dollar mortgages.

Closing the Racial Wealth Gap

To advance the community-driven policy agenda created as part of the Cincinnati Truth & Equity initiative, CCR and the Cincinnati BCR team are working to develop recommendations aimed at closing the racial wealth gap in Cincinnati. The racial wealth gap study will predict the impact of a small-dollar mortgage program as part of a comprehensive effort to promote economic mobility for Black women in Cincinnati.

With community input, the study is mapping the cyclical and non-linear relationships between systemic factors perpetuating wealth gaps and diminishing legacy homeownership. At the same time, we are building community capacity to lead advocacy efforts to address social and economic inequities. Efforts to increase homeownership and housing quality in these communities will be a first step in a more expansive housing and economic mobility strategy that includes apprenticeship programs, small business investments in Black neighborhoods, and public-private partnerships that can help stabilize lower income communities at risk of losing generational residents due to gentrification. Policy efforts to increase access to resources and opportunity for Black women will be part of a targeted universalism approach that will have a positive impact on all of Cincinnati's residents who are experiencing poverty or economic instability.

Policy and Advocacy

JFfC utilizes the support of CCR's Policy Lab to respond to local and statewide advocacy opportunities related to critical issues ranging from the ongoing opioid epidemic to the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic. With CCR's support, JFfC leadership developed relationships with legislators and were asked to provide continued guidance and information as more funding is allocated to both the trauma-informed care funding for families and children and prevention and response to the opioid crisis. Cincinnati BCR has also been involved in crafting coalition letters, letters to the editor, and best practice information on the biological impact of ACEs and the need for upstream analysis and response to the multi-generational trauma that results from structural racism and other drivers of systemic inequity.

Next Steps

With each channel working to accomplish specific system goals and objectives, the JFfC Steering Committee is developing dashboards to measure channel work and systems impact using a multi-method evaluation approach. JFfC will continue to learn from the national BCR learning collaborative and other cities that are developing community-wide measurement of exposure to adversities and factors that support resilience.

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