



KITSAP
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION



THE SUQUAMISH TRIBE



United Way of Kitsap County



Kitsap Strong: ACEs & Resiliency Collective Impact Initiative

Kitsap County has a rich history of collaboration and partnership in improving health and safety outcomes for children and families. The culture of the community is “action-oriented” and organizations mobilize quickly in response to shared concerns.

In the early 2000’s, the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) research was first introduced to community partners through the work of the Family Policy Council and the Kitsap Health and Safety Network, “the Network.” Though there was not yet the balance of robust resiliency research, neuroscience, and epigenetics information to frame the ACEs research, community leaders from various organizations joined together, with the support of the Network, to develop a strategic plan for County-wide dissemination of information and resources about the Search Institute’s developmental asset model of positive child and youth development.

In 2004, the Network initiated the formation of Kitsap Youth Partnership, a public and private sector partnership designed to broaden the base of financial support for projects and services focused on strengthening developmental assets in children and youth. In 2007, the Network, with the aid of a media consultant, developed an aggressive three year community awareness and fundraising campaign, called “Kitsap Cares About Kids,” which was designed to motivate businesses, organizations, governments, and individuals to strengthen their relationships with young people. The Network was an effective collaboration that laid the groundwork for the powerful relationships, innovation, and spirit of co-learning that underpin Kitsap Strong.

The community capacity and resiliency building efforts of the Network through the developmental assets initiative have been linked to increased youth participation in community service and to providing a formal process for youth leadership in decision making, through the Youth Commission. The initiative raised funding of resiliency-building programs, and increased engagement of parents and professionals providing mentorship and support to youth. The developmental assets initiative is credited with helping lead to a reduction of child abuse and neglect referrals, fewer youth reports of substance abuse, decreased juvenile arrests, fewer weapons in school, and improved academic performance and graduation rates. This work established a solid foundation of collaboration within the County in resiliency-focused initiatives from which to build. Throughout the decade, health, education, and social service leaders have kept abreast of the ACEs research and the emerging link to neuroscience and resiliency.

In 2011, Kitsap County Public Health Department (KPHD), the United Way, and Harrison Hospital (our county’s largest healthcare provider), engaged community leaders from a broad range of sectors, including military, government, health, social service, not-for-profit, and faith-based sectors, in the Kitsap Community Health Priorities (KCHP) process. The KCHP process is a data driven, shared decision-making process, where community members collaborate to identify top public health priorities. “Ensuring children and youth receive the support necessary to be healthy throughout life” materialized as a top health priority. Several

members who had been instrumental in the developmental assets initiative identified the emergence of this priority as a natural opportunity to focus on ACEs education, prevention, and intervention efforts through the formation of a multi-sector Kitsap ACEs Partnership. The ACEs Partnership believes the “NEAR sciences bundle” provides the right balance of resiliency research, neuroscience, and epigenetics information to frame the ACEs conversation and empowers people to engage in “hope-filled action” and work towards transforming the cultural beliefs, values, and perceptions that perpetuate our current social systems.

In 2013, the Kitsap Community Foundation (KCF), in collaboration with the United Way and the Suquamish Tribe, was awarded a Bill and Melinda Gate’s Foundation grant to reduce intergenerational poverty. The United Way, through its passionate commitment to early education and birth-to-five services, identified reduction of ACEs as critical to furthering their goals. The Suquamish Tribe, a strong local funder, has a tribal council focused on community development, improvement in tribal public health, and has been an early investor and believer in the ACEs Partnership. The collective efforts of the ACEs Partnership and the collaboration spear-headed by KCF helped set the stage for ACEs to be considered one of the top health priorities during the 2014 KCHP process. County-wide data on ACEs and resiliency, including the disparately high prevalence of adults reporting 6-8 ACEs (12-22%) and extremely high inter-generational transmission of ACEs (19-35%), convinced over 70 local leaders that ACEs should emerge as the top health priority from the KCHP process.

Since 2014, the Kitsap Strong collective impact team (KPHD, KCF, United Way, and Suquamish Tribe) has convened two county-wide “ACEs Summits” to build community support and establish the basis for a larger collective impact process. The team facilitated a community training on the collective impact process, and has been innovative and responsive to community feedback, resulting in their decision to fund a project director position to act as a *backbone* to help advance the project.

Kitsap Strong is engaging additional partners to join the “steering committee” and plans to have a larger team (by the end of June) working on developing expanded common goals, metrics, and building upon the ACEs Partnership’s strategic educational outreach plan. Much of the groundwork for this process has already been conducted through the *ACEs Summits*, interviews with local leaders, and targeted trainings to key sectors (mental health, early learning, primary care, education, military, & service organizations). Kitsap is well poised to maximize any funding opportunities because of our strong collective impact foundation, a long history of collaboration, and the action-oriented culture of our community.

Kitsap Strong is the newest chapter in a decade long story of community partnership focused on improving outcomes for children and families. Our community has been acknowledged at a state level for our collaborative work and Kitsap County has recently been selected to participate in the Washington State Nonprofit “Community Impact Project” (CIP). This project facilitates co-learning between community leaders throughout the state, provides technical assistance with implementation, and promotes local cross-sector initiatives focused on improving health outcomes for children and families. An important component of this project is the support from the Governor’s Office to explore policy level innovations based on community feedback. Kitsap Strong is honored to be a part of this learning project and hopeful to continue mobilizing additional resources/partners to further this important work.