



**ANOKA COUNTY  
CHILDREN & FAMILY COUNCIL**

**For Immediate Release**

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**Anoka County Children and Family Council to host Community Conversations Oct. 27 with goal of reducing adverse childhood experiences**

The Anoka County Children and Family Council will host two virtual Community Conversations Oct. 27 to identify strengths and challenges impacting children and families. The discussions will help discover ways community members might work together in 2022 and beyond to address adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

Sessions are free and registration is required. Links are available on the Anoka County website, <https://www.anokacounty.us/1897/Educational-Opportunities>.

Two conversation sessions will offer the same agenda, 10 a.m. to noon and 6 to 8 p.m. Anyone interested in building a more resilient community where kids and adults can thrive is encouraged to participate in a session.

Staff from FamilyWise will present information on building resilient communities. Virtual breakout rooms will allow small group discussions on what participants are experiencing in their community.

It's an opportunity to positively impact the future, according to Jerry Pederson, ACCFC co-chair and director of Anoka County Community Social Service and Behavioral Health.

"Some time will be devoted to sharing the science behind adverse childhood experiences to set the stage," Pederson said. "The goal of the two conversations is to hear what people are experiencing and to begin dialoguing."

Adverse childhood experiences are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example:

- experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide

Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with:

**-more-**



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- substance use problems
- mental health problems
- instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use problems in adulthood. ACEs can also negatively impact education, job opportunities, and earning potential. However, ACEs can be prevented.

ACCFC emphasizes a strength-based approach, according to Laura Seifert-Hertling, ACCFC co-chair and director of Special Services for the Fridley School District.

“Since 1994, the Anoka County Children and Family Council has been all about collaboration to build on what’s working and address what can be improved,” Seifert-Hertling said.

This work is being led by the ACCFC, whose members include Anoka County, Anoka County Community Action Program, non-profits (Alexandra House, Emma B. Howe YMCA, Lee Carlson Center, Lord of Life Lutheran Church, Neighborhood HealthSource – North Metro Clinic, and The Enitan Story), parent representatives, and seven school districts (Anoka-Hennepin, Centennial, Columbia Heights, Forest Lake, Fridley, Spring Lake Park, and St. Francis). Other community service providers also attend and participate in meetings.

The Community Conversations are part of a process, outlined by the Minnesota Department of Human Services, to help the ACCFC partner with individuals and agencies to prevent adverse childhood and community experiences, to heal, and to build community resilience.

Individual interviews also are occurring with a variety of people to gather insights about struggles children and families face in the county, observations about community strengths, and suggestions for improvements.

Information gleaned through interviews and the Community Conversations will be reviewed alongside other local data to create a plan for preventing or reducing adverse childhood and community experiences, to be implemented in 2022 and beyond.

Christine Cole, collaborative coordinator for the Anoka County Children and Family Council, encourages participation in the Oct. 27 Community Conversations from youth, parents, seniors, service providers, and community leaders.

“I feel fortunate to be part of a caring community in Anoka County,” Cole said. “I also know when we work together, we can come up with ways to further strengthen our community and help each other thrive.”

To learn more about this project, contact Jill Brown, project consultant, at [Jill@JillBrownPR.com](mailto:Jill@JillBrownPR.com).