



Episode 09: Adverse Childhood Effects (ACEs) in Maryland with Glenn Fueston

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Intro:

Welcome to the NCJA Podcast. This podcast series explores promising practices, provides guidance on strategic planning, and discusses how the Byrne Justice Assistance Grant Program or Byrne JAG contributes to improving justice systems across the country. We hope you enjoy it.

Gillian Caplan:

Thank you so much for joining us today on our NCJA Podcast series. My name is Gillian Caplan and I'm a program manager at NCJA. Today we are going to be discussing Maryland Governor Larry Hogan's new executive order to tackle the impacts of adverse childhood effects or ACEs and programming being implemented throughout the state. Joining me today is Glenn Fueston, the executive director of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services. Thank you for being here, Glenn. I'd love to start by hearing a little more about your background and then we can dive right into the questions?

Glenn Fueston:

Sounds great. Thank you very much, Gillian. I really appreciate the opportunity to talk about this really impactful executive order that the governor put out. My background I started off working for the federal government, doing a lot of work in the intelligence industry and in case support and criminal investigations for a program called the HIDTA. And that really showed me how to start utilizing data to impact decision making. We were using it for our criminal cases and investigations. And when the governor called asked me to be the executive director here of the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services, one of our major objectives was to start using evidence and evidence based practices and data in order to help make our funding decisions and develop programs. So I'm really excited to be here.

Gillian Caplan:

Great. Well, we're really excited to have you. Before we dive into some of the programming that's being implemented, I think it could be really helpful if we have you briefly describe ACEs, why it's so important to address and what impacts ACEs can have on community violence?

Glenn Fueston:

Adverse childhood experiences or ACEs originated from a study done by the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente in 1995 through 1997. And what it really reflects is it identifies experiences that children can go through that center around abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction that can lead towards for wellbeing moving forward. And some of the things that we've seen happen with higher

instances of ACEs are substance abuse, early smoking, chronic pulmonary disease, depression, cancer, and even early death.

So in these measures, what the researchers did is they identified things in the neighborhood of physical and emotional sexual abuse, physical and emotional neglect, and then other things in the household like mental illness, witnessing domestic violence in their intimate partner violence, divorce, incarceration, and substance abuse. And surprising we saw that there were so many of these findings. We identified that two thirds of the study participants had at least one ACE and one in five reported that they had three or more ACEs. And the correlation between the increase in ACEs and the increases for the negative outcomes go in parallel. So in terms of why we feel it's so important to address these, obviously it's for wellbeing of the children later in life. How we can make sure that we avoid some of these negative consequences later in life and establish positive outcomes because it really can destroy their lives, but also can produce a real economic toll on our society in the long run, through healthcare costs, prison, homelessness, joblessness, et cetera.

Gillian Caplan:

As we now have a better understanding of what ACEs are and how it impacts community violence. I'd love if you could talk a little bit about the different programs that the Maryland governor's office has implemented to address ACEs?

Glenn Fueston:

Certainly. Governor Hogan has made helping our youth a top priority for his administration. We've distributed over 156 million through organizations and agencies to help kids and youth. And there's programs that are specific, but I think the first way that he started that is by re-imagining our office. Our office is the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services. And what we are able to do by bringing professionals from the law enforcement field, from the victim services field, in the children youth field together is we're able to have this comprehensive wraparound approach to addressing children and prevention issues in the state as a whole. One of the biggest programs that we just most recently announced was Project Bounce Back, which was a commitment from the governor for \$25 million. It's a public private partnership where the governor came out to launch this at one of our boys and girls clubs to create better outcomes for our youth.

And in this project, we're really focused on some of the experiences that children had through COVID. So we obviously we talked about what ACEs are, but we're seeing that the COVID had a serious impact on our children as well on their mental health, their physical health, their learning. And some of them were unfortunately locked in homes with abusive adults and we really wanted to make sure that we were able to address them. So in Project Bounce Back, it has several different components and there are six regional health teams that we're going to establish across the state as a partnership with the department of education. We're going to utilize the boys and girls clubs that are already in existence in Maryland, but we're going to double the number of children that we're going to be able to touch. We're going to be able to, at the end of this project, we believe we'll be working with about 45,000 kids as a result of this project.

And then there's a technology component with Microsoft, LinkedIn Learning, KPMG, Discourse Analytics, and a company called eCare Vault. And that project is called Connected Care. And what we're able to do with this project is connect all of these providers and these boys and girls clubs in their schools in law enforcement and different agencies across the state eventually to share information

about these children and the programs that they're engaged in and how they're getting assistance. The program will also look at things like what other programming is available using the extensive library out of LinkedIn Learning, KPMG, the Discourse Analytics component is going to use artificial intelligence to identify new programming, to work with these kids. The eCare Vault components with logging information will also provide the analytics and the information for analytics to measure the impact these kids are having. So we're really excited about that project moving forward. And again, the public private partnership with those companies.

There's a couple other programs that we have in December of 2018, the governor announced Handle with Care program. With this program, it's a collaboration between law enforcement schools and the community whereby we've educated law enforcement about witnessing children that have experienced trauma in the household. So when a police officer goes on a call, if they see that a child has either witnessed or been a part of a traumatic incident, they make a simple email contact with the child's school to say that that child has a traumatic incident. They don't share any details about the incident or anything to that effect. Just simply let them know that they witnessed a traumatic incident.

And what that does is that keys the school in to get counseling to that child or give other services to that child. And it starts this network of communication where we believe that eventually we're going to have them connected into not only with the school, but also with the boys and girls club and the Project Bounce Back that I just mentioned. The final project that we work on is the governor supports grantees throughout the state. And we do that through child advocacy centers, local management boards, and other youth serving agencies. And each one of those in our grants are required to address ACEs specifically.

Gillian Caplan:

Now, that we know a little bit about the background of ACEs and a lot of the programming that you all are doing, it's obvious that the targeted age group is young people. I was hoping you could talk a little bit about why this age group is so critical to reach when reducing violence?

Glenn Fueston:

Certainly. Well, children are our future. I believe in that very strongly, I believe the governor does as well. And in reaching these children is of utmost important. When we look at some of the data surrounding ACEs, we identified that 90% of all juvenile offenders have experienced ACEs and 30% of justice involved American youth the same. In other statistics, we have the CDC reports that five of the top 10 leading causes of death are associated with ACEs. So we're seeing this type of patterns show up with the ACEs and certainly need to address that in all of our children to make sure that we can better their lives and move things forward.

The toxic stress that people talk about a lot of times, especially in infants and children can also have a negative lasting effect on the brain structure. So we see the early childhood development component of this also coming into play. So if we can remove some of these ACEs from the children and from the children's home at a very early age, we think that the outcome down the road will be much better. In that component, it's critical to provide relief and support during the sensitive development period of children, because without those opportunities, challenges may exist regarding their ability to emotionally respond, process, and socially interact.

Gillian Caplan:

Thank you. One of the main reasons that we do this podcast is because we really want to highlight some of the amazing promising practices that are happening nationwide, such as the work that's being done in Maryland through this programming. And we'd love to talk a little bit more so that our listeners can know how Byrne JAG Funding helped to implement some of this programming and ACEs?

Glenn Fueston:

Certainly. So Byrne JAG Funding or BJ Funding was instrumental in this program. In the early stages in collaborations with the boys and girls club, matter of fact, we took half of our Byrne JAG Assistance dollars, and we used it to open additional clubs in the state. So even before Project Bounce Back, we're using the JAG funds in order to open these clubs. And the way that we were doing that is we also have a program in Maryland called the Maryland Criminal Intelligence Network, which is a collaboration of local and state law enforcement agencies that are out identifying, disrupting, and dismantling local and multi-state and international criminal organizations in Maryland. And what we identified though through years of experience with my fed job and then once with coming here is that when criminal organizations are dismantled or disrupted, it leads a void or vacuum in the state.

Unfortunately, these children and youth look to those organizations sometimes for safety, sometimes for food, sometimes for emotional support. So when we were removing these criminal organizations, we found this void. So what we decided to do using Byrne JAG dollars is we opened up boys and girls clubs in the same communities where our Maryland criminal intelligence networks existed. So this way, when a criminal organization was removed from the streets, the community and the youth in the community specifically had a positive place to go to interact with adults and with other caregivers. So we're really, really happy with being able to utilize the Byrne Justice dollars for that. Also, through that program and through the Byrne dollars, we're able to fund some programs with the police athletic league or power programming, which help build opportunities and strengthen the youth and law enforcement engagement.

And obviously in this time, we certainly believe that that community engagement with law enforcement is very important. We have a couple collaborations with local law enforcement. Our state police is now piloting in five of our boys and girls clubs, where they go out on a regular basis and interact with these children. They're playing sports games, but they're also doing stem activities and working with the children, however they possibly can. So we're really, again, very happy with how this funding is able to support programs that reduce ACEs, that develop the collaboration with law enforcement. Most importantly, we're utilizing data as I mentioned in our opening in order to identify where problems are to develop programs that are all evidence based and then to measure our impact. So we're really able to drive that forward. The bottom line is the funding is helping to build a safer community in saving lives in Maryland.

Gillian Caplan:

So you've talked some about the different people that you're bringing into the programming and who you have involved. So when you're implementing these types of programs and trying to encourage buy-in, what stakeholders are necessary to engage? Those that you've already kind of talked about, but then also those that you may have not mentioned yet?

Glenn Fueston:

Certainly. So in our office and I think just by the mere nature of how the governor established this office we're working with law enforcement. We're working with justice reform individuals, we're working with children and youth serving agencies, and we're working with victim services.

Our office is tied into many agencies at the state level, but also at the local level. And we really take a collaborative and multidisciplinary approach when we're working this. So extreme collaboration at every level is critical. So we're working with leadership across state agencies to ensure that they are bought in on the thought bases and on working with these children. We're working with people from the healthcare system, nonprofit organizations, community bases, law enforcement schools, child welfare, faith-based organizations, and even most importantly just the regular members of the community and educating them on what ACEs are and why they're so important to reduce them.

Gillian Caplan:

So I know some of your programming has been around for a while, but some of it is also really new, but I'd love to hear a little bit about some of the successes that you've seen in combating ACEs through the programming that your office has already implemented?

Glenn Fueston:

Certainly. As I mentioned, all of the programming that we're funding are evidence based programs, so that's one of the first things that we look for is that there's evidence in all of the different programming that we're providing. And we have programs at boys girls clubs like Smart Girls and Passport to Manhood that provide classes to youth with evidence informed programming that helps them identify and tackle barriers that hinders positive youth development. We've introduced the boys and girls club to the One Love Foundation which teaches kids about healthy relationships and how to help a friend that may be an abusive situation.

All of these programs have been shown through evidence to reduce adverse childhood experiences and to build resiliency in our kids. So we're certainly see that type of impact. Through our initial investment with the Byrne Justice Assistance dollars, we are able to positively impact more than 4,000 kids at the boys and girls club and have grown those clubs to 27 clubs around the state.

And again, we're looking to double that now with our latest investment in Project Bounce Back. And we're trying to bring that number up to about 45,000 kids that will be able to positively impact with these evidence based programs. Also, when we're working with the Handle with Care program that I mentioned earlier, it's implemented in 16 counties so far, and we've sent out almost 3,300 notices to the schools that has impacted more than 4,000 kids. So we're seeing these positive impacts. We're seeing the advances working with these children, and we're hoping that at the end of this cycle, we have built in some outcome based performance measures where we'll be able to actually see the ACEs dropping throughout the state. And working with these kids is just amazing. One of the things that probably resonated with me the most was at a boys and girls club event, where we had law enforcement at the event. And you could see these kids shying away from law enforcement because of possibly the negative impression that they had with law enforcement at the beginning of the event.

By the end of the event they're playing dodgeball with these law enforcement officers, then they were doing some stem activities with the law enforcement officers. And the kids were acting as if they were friends with law enforcement. What could be a better positive impact.

Gillian Caplan:

Absolutely. So with successes, there's obviously always some challenges. What are some of the obstacles and challenges you've encountered when standing up these programs initially as well as continuing to implement them?

Glenn Fueston:

I think that the initial challenge is certainly everybody's got so much on their plate right now. There are so many needs across our state, across the country, especially as a result of COVID. So I think that one of the initial challenges is simply educating people about ACEs in adverse childhood experiences. But I think that once they see what ACEs are and they see the evidence behind ACEs and the negative impacts that they're having on our children, they're very quick to adopt these types of programs. And the CDC has outlined several different strategies that we can use. And we've been working with them, the community members to fit their niche. So every community is a little bit different in what they need and different programs are focused on different areas. So they can come in at different perspectives.

And we've seen several different programs in the CDC, again, outline strategies for strengthening economic supports for the families, promoting social norms, ensuring strong start for children, teaching skills to help parents and youth handle stress, manage emotions, and tackle everyday challenges. Connecting youth with caring adults and intervening to less the immediate long term harms. The governor and the lieutenant governor certainly believe in a two generational approach in one of the bullets there that we just talked about, teaching skills to help parent, we're finding that it's not all working directly with the children. Sometimes we're working with the parents, sometimes we're working with the grandparents to teach the best skills that we can to move forward. Our goal is to make entities aware of the best practices and use the most up-to-date information possible to ensure that there's a reduction in these negative effects.

Gillian Caplan:

Great. So everyone always talks about sustainability, because that's obviously the most important thing. How do we make these programs last and be successful? How do you plan to ensure sustainability and long lasting success for this type of programming?

Glenn Fueston:

Well, certainly. Sustainability is extremely important and it's something that we thought about long and hard. So we're obviously looking at the grant dollars and where we can get those from the federal government. But we're also educating people across the state. Governor Hogan issued an executive order, directing all state agencies to work, to address ACEs, so that is now an executive order. So now we have the force of all of the executive offices of the governor that are focusing on how can they help with that? And that's obviously impacting agencies like the juvenile services, the department of health, department of human services, but it's also going into programs like the department of commerce and the department of labor on how can we work with the families to ensure sustainability for income and providing that best place for those children. So that's certainly spreading down throughout state government, is certainly something that we're doing.

Governor Hogan also just named me the chair of a newly formed commission on trauma informed care for the state. So we'll continue to educate people and to embed these evidence based

practices and these solutions from the CDC and in different studies to reduce ACEs across the state. We're also building into our funding, the requirement to reduce adverse childhood experiences. So our office administers about 200 million a year to local agencies and state agencies. And in most of the novice that we have, if there's a connection to the children or the youth, we're building in a requirement to show us how their organization is supporting the reduction of adverse childhood experiences. So our real hope is to catch things early on so that we can work with these kids. We can educate people throughout state government, and local government on the importance, so that there's a commitment from them, both from the time standpoint, but also from the fiscal side of the house.

Gillian Caplan:

Thank you. This has been incredibly enlightening and really exciting. So, Glenn, thank you so much for joining me today and thank you to all our listeners for joining us as well.

Closing:

Thanks again to Glenn Fueston, executive director of the Maryland Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, & Victim Services. To learn more about their work, you can visit goccp.maryland.gov. To hear more episodes of the NCJA Podcast, visit us at ncja.org. Thank you.