Strong, capable, resourceful families are at the foundation of improving outcomes for children. There is no substitute for families – no institution, program or policy that can successfully rear kids in the absence of strong families. Where families live also matters. Healthy, vibrant families help create strong communities. Similarly, healthy communities can help foster and protect residents. When communities are sag and have strong institutions, good schools and quality support services families and their children are more likely to thrive. Although the strengths and resources that reside in even the most disadvantaged communities are often underestimated, the combined effects of disinvestment and decline have unmistakable consequences for children who grow up amidst these conditions.
Since the release of the first KIDS COUNT report in 1995, much has been learned about child brain development and the impact of significant adversity during childhood. The Adverse Childhood Experience Study – an extensive study by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) begun in 1995 – revealed that childhood trauma is a common experience.

Why Does it Matter?
The CDC study looked specifically at the impact of adverse experiences on health later in life and found a link between ACEs to adult illness and early death, as well as to poor quality of life in adulthood. Exposure to ACEs can lead children, adolescents and adults toward the adoption of unhealthy habits such as substance abuse and smoking as well as to negative long-term health issues such as obesity, chronic illness and mental health problems. The impact is particularly sharp when multiple adverse events are experienced.

Next Steps
Despite a significant prevalence of ACEs, policymakers, families, community leaders and health care service providers can create environments where children can flourish and thrive. Trauma-informed approaches – meaning a different way of looking at an individual’s actions and their health outcomes associated with them that moves us from the question “what’s wrong with that child?” to “what happened to him or her?” – show potential for positive impact. Trauma-informed approaches are not a therapy, intervention or specific action but instead a lens with which to view policies, procedures, programs and practices.

Prevalence of ACES
Adults 18+ years – Delaware & US

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percentage of adults (18+ years) who reported one or more ACEs</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S. adults one or more ACEs</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S. children one or more ACEs</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delaware children one or more ACEs</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2015 Delaware Household Health Survey, The Delaware Public Health Institute

Adverse Childhood Experiences Timeline

- **Risks**: The CDC’s Adverse Childhood Experience Study reveals that experiencing multiple types of adversity during childhood is associated with higher risk of both physical and mental health issues.
- **Survey**: The National Survey of Children’s Health asks adults about adverse experiences of children currently in their household.
- **Trauma Matters**: Trauma Matters Delaware hosts first annual Delaware Trauma Matters conference.
- **Survey**: The Delaware Household Survey asks adults about their own adverse experiences as a child.
- **Informed**: Delaware becomes a Trauma-Informed State by executive order.
- **Policies**: Advance trauma-informed policies and resilience building practices throughout Delaware’s child serving community

- **1998**
- **2011/12**
- **2013**
- **2015**
- **2018**
- **Next**
25 Years of Delaware Data: Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Number of Substantiated Cases of Abuse or Neglect in Hundreds

Source: Delaware Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families

Percentage Reported of Polysubstance Use
Delaware 11th graders, 2018

Source: Delaware School Survey, Center for Drug and Health Studies, University of Delaware
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The photographs in this data snapshot do not necessarily represent the situations described.

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