

# ACEs and Next Steps Group Facilitation Guide

This guide offers steps to facilitate a group planning session around The ACE Study research and its implications on an individual, organization, professional sector, and/or community. The process outlined will lead participants toward identifying specific actions they can take to address The ACE Study findings.

## The set up

The ideal time for this session is 1.5 hours. If less time is available, you may have to limit the length of the discussions and the number of ideas participants share. This session works best for smaller groups (20-30 people max). If you have a larger group, consider having a couple of facilitators lead smaller groups through this process, with time to come together as one large group to talk through the actions generated by each team and next steps for moving forward.

## Participant preparation

This process assumes participants are familiar with The ACE Study research. You may want to give a brief presentation on ACEs and Iowa's findings to familiarize the group at the beginning. A short presentation developed by The Central Iowa ACEs 360 Steering Committee with talking points can be found here: <https://www.dropbox.com/sh/n84n77nsq5odqdu/p7yiNfyOLM>. Participants could also be encouraged to take a learning module on The ACE Study (details to come soon), or read through the information and resources found on [www.iowaaces360.org](http://www.iowaaces360.org).

## Preparing for the session

This process is designed to help a group identify specific actions to address The ACE Study findings as a 1) professional sector, 2) organization, or 3) community. Identify ahead of time which one of the three areas the group would like to focus its attention and prepare questions to focus on that one area (see areas highlighted in blue on the following pages). Also talk to the group leader about the goals for this session so you can steer the conversation in that direction and arrive at a point the group desires. Make sure the goals are realistic with the time available.

## Materials

Each participant should start with plenty of loose-leaf paper or post-it notes and writing utensils such as markers or crayons. You may also want to bring a white board or flip chart to capture ideas during larger group brainstorms and tape to post action ideas as they are shared at the end.

## Follow Up

Make sure you or someone else is gathering the ideas generated. After the session, write up those ideas and share them. An example of a follow-up document is available in the ACEs presentations folder.

If you have questions about this process, e-mail [iowaaces@gmail.com](mailto:iowaaces@gmail.com) or [swelch@pcaiowa.org](mailto:swelch@pcaiowa.org).

This facilitation process was adapted from a process developed by Caitlin Suginaka, State Home Visitation Quality Assurance Program Manager, Iowa Department of Public Health

## ACEs Overview: What are the main points we've learned about The ACE Study? (10-15 minutes)

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS: Although the group has been asked to prepare for today's session by learning about ACEs, there may be a few participants who are unfamiliar with the topic. Gauge participants' understanding of ACEs by asking who has heard about the study. Even if the audience has heard about ACEs, it may be helpful to share a few highlights to ensure the group is starting out on the same page. Consider one of these steps to start the session:

- Pass out a one-page handout sharing information about ACEs and Iowa data
- Give a 5-10 minute presentation on the key points about the ACEs research.
- Ask everyone in the room to share one thing they remember most about the ACEs research.

## Focused Conversation: How can we have an impact on ACEs and their outcomes? (20-30 minutes)

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS: This focused discussion will allow participants to reflect on what they've learned about ACEs and begin to consider ways of responding to the research findings. Here are some tips for managing a productive conversation:

- Before beginning, explain that the purpose of this discussion.
- Give everyone an opportunity to speak. Consider asking for everyone's response to the first question before allowing anyone to comment at random on future questions.
- Allow the conversation to flow in a direction that makes sense to the group. You may not get to every question. However, if you notice the conversation veering in a direction that is off-focus from the desired outcome, jump in with a new question or remind the group of the focus.
- If you ask a question and don't receive an immediate response, wait several seconds before asking the question in a new way or throwing out a new question.

### QUESTIONS

1. What is one thing that stands out to you about the ACEs research? What about the Iowa ACEs data? (If not covered in the activity above.)
2. What negative or positive reactions did you have when hearing about the ACEs findings?
3. How do these findings relate to anything you have discovered or noticed in your *(profession/organization/community)*?
4. What do these findings mean to your *(profession/organization/community)*? What do these findings mean for Iowa overall?
5. How does your role in your *(professional sector/organization/community)* have an impact on ACEs and their outcomes?
6. What is one way you could address ACEs in your *(profession/organization/community)*?

7. Who else would you like to collaborate with to have an even bigger impact on ACEs and their outcomes? Who else needs to know about this information and take action?
8. What is one way this (*professional sector/organization/community*) could have a greater impact on ACEs and their outcomes?

## **Individual Brainstorm: What can we do to address ACEs? (5 minutes)**

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS: Pass out a sheet of paper or post-it notes to each person. Ask everyone to work through the following questions on their own. If time is limited, have them come up with 5-10 ideas total for individual and group actions.

- What can you do to address ACEs in your (*profession/organization/community*)?
  - Write 5-10 ideas on one sheet or one idea per post-it note
- How can this group address ACEs collectively as a (*professional sector/organization/community*)?
  - Write 5-10 ideas on another sheet or one idea per post-it note

## **Small Group Sharing: How can we address ACEs individually and as a group? (10-20 minutes)**

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS: Have each person team up with another teammate or two and work through the following steps:

1. Each share your top 3-5 responses for how you can individually address ACEs in your (*profession/organization/community*).
2. Each share your top 3-5 responses for how this group can collectively address ACEs.
3. Decide on 3-5 actions total that individuals or this group could take to address ACEs.
  - Pick your 1-2 most creative ideas
  - Pick your 1-2 most practical ideas
  - Pick one “wild card” or unexpected idea
4. Write each action on a 1/2 sheet of paper in large type.

## **Large Group Sharing: What are the top actions we can take to address ACEs? (20 minutes)**

FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS: Ask everyone to come together as a larger group to share what they discussed. Let each small group share its top ideas that people could take individually or as a group to address ACEs. Keep in mind that a cohesive group may be more focused on taking larger group actions, but other groups may be more at the individual reflection and action stage. Getting a mix of ideas for

individual and group actions may be valuable. If the group is large or time is limited, ask each group to share only 2-3 top actions. Make sure you collect all half-sheets with action ideas or ask for a scribe to take notes on the ideas shared.

- Ask each group to share the top actions they decided on to address ACEs. Give time for short conversation if needed but limit the discussion so each group has a chance to share.

## **Group Discussion: Where do we go from here? (10-20 minutes)**

**FACILITATOR DIRECTIONS:** End the session with a discussion of the actions that have been identified and next steps this group could take to move forward in addressing ACEs as individuals or as a group.

### **QUESTIONS:**

1. What are common themes you notice from the actions shared today? What categories could we use to group these actions?
2. Are there actions that surprise you or you haven't thought of before? Which actions captivated you the most?
3. Which actions seem most feasible to carry out?
4. Which actions seem like they would have the most impact?
5. Which actions seem good but might not be feasible for this group?
6. Is there something major missing from this list?
7. How do you as a group want to move forward?

*On the following page is a handout suggesting a process for identifying next steps, which the group can use during a follow-up meeting.*

## Next Steps

We hope you found the facilitated brainstorming session useful in identifying concrete, feasible actions you can take individually or as a group to address ACEs.

After this session, the facilitator or a group representative should provide a document that shares the group's identified actions grouped by common themes (such as training, community building, raising awareness, etc.). Limit your themes to five total. All of the ideas gathered during the session can also be shared in a separate list.

For your next meeting, consider focusing on identifying a few actions that this group can feasibly carry out and working through the next steps needed to complete those actions. This handout can guide you through that process.

### Group Discussion: What actions do we want to take?

As a group, spend some time digesting what you discussed in the last session and thinking about which actions you want to focus on. You may want to consider these questions:

#### QUESTIONS:

1. What is one thing that stood out to you from our actions brainstorming session? What do you remember most?
2. Which actions surprised you or caught your attention and why?
3. What thoughts or feelings did you have when leaving the brainstorming session?
4. What thoughts or feelings do you have about the brainstorming session now?
5. Which actions could have the biggest impact on ACEs and their outcomes?
6. Which actions might cause more harm than good?
7. What strengths would we bring to an effort to address ACEs?
8. What weaknesses or barriers do we face in responding to the ACEs research?
9. What resources do we have to support this work?
10. Based on our strengths, weaknesses and resources:
  - a. Which actions seem most feasible to carry out?
  - b. Which actions seem nice but might not be feasible?
11. If you were to pick one action to focus on which would it be?

Write each of the actions this group identifies to focus on at the top of a large sheet of paper.

### Group Discussion on Next Steps: What will we need to do to make our brainstorm a reality?

Either break into smaller groups with each group taking on one of the actions identified or as a large

group, work through each action together. Come up with a list of steps needed to complete each action. Here are some questions to consider for each action item:

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Who needs to be involved in carrying out this action?
2. Who should be responsible for carrying out this action or leading it through completion?
3. How do you envision the process of completing this action?
4. What might the timeline look like to carry this out?
5. Where will this happen?
6. What resources do we need to make this happen?
7. What tools/methods will you use?

By the end of this process, the group should spell out a list of all the steps needed to complete the identified action. The following are examples of next steps *if needed* to guide the conversation

Action: Educate all departments on ACEs

*Next steps brainstorm:*

1. Come up with a list of all departments and who to connect with
2. Educate the head of the company on why this effort is important and get support
3. Bring a group together to develop a training or identify available training tools available
4. Contact each department with information about why this training is important
5. Develop a core group of trainers to deliver presentations
6. Develop talking points or materials on why this training is important for everyone to take
7. Set up training times with each department
8. Evaluate effectiveness of trainings