



Collaboratively Honoring & Healing Communities

Community Resilience Initiatives Summary Report for Fiscal Year 2022

Overview

More Resilient Minnesota seeks to improve the health and resilience of current and future generations. Resilience includes individuals' inherent strengths and nurtured capacities as well as the resources and supports of their families, communities, and cultures. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) has contracted with FamilyWise Services to support Children's Mental Health and Family Services Collaboratives throughout each phase:

- Phase 1: Collaboratives offer ACE Interface *Understanding ACEs: Building Self-Healing Communities* presentations to raise awareness of neurobiology, epigenetics, adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), and resilience.
- Phase 2: Collaborative partners, community members, and/or caregivers are trained to deliver *Understanding ACEs: Building Self-Healing Communities* presentations.
- Phase 3: Collaboratives gather community wisdom through group Community Resilience Conversations and/or one-on-one *100 Cups of Coffee* Interviews.
- Phase 4: Driven by community data gathered in Phase 3 as well as existing data from the Minnesota Student Survey and other data sources, Collaboratives develop and implement Community Resilience Plans to reduce the impact of ACEs and enhance community resilience.

Community Resilience Initiatives

In January 2022, Collaboratives in Phase 4 of More Resilient Minnesota were invited to send materials to be considered for micro grants to implement initiatives based upon portions of their Community Resilience Plans. Two Collaborative communities each received micro grants of \$5,000 as seed or startup funding. Implementation spanned February 24, 2022, to June 30, 2022. Given the size of the awards and short timeline, grantees selected strategies from their more comprehensive Community Resilience Plans that would be the most feasible to achieve. Also given the limited implementation period, grantees were only asked to identify short-term outcomes to measure the impact of their efforts.

One challenge faced by both grantees was the limited amount of time for implementation, especially given the fact that both Collaboratives' communities worked to ensure their efforts were youth-guided and culturally responsive. Both grantees also contended with the logistics and paperwork needed for hiring and contracting, and for obtaining parental consent for youth participation. These processes were new for many youth and their families as well as community vendors.

Despite these challenges, grantees strengthened partnerships, created new connections, and built trust with youth and with BIPOC community partners. Youth learned self-regulation, coping skills, and strategies for supporting their peers. Both shared reminders that “life happens,” and authentic partnerships take time.

FY 2022 Community Resilience Initiative Grantees

Anoka County Children & Family Council (ACCFC)

- Expand *Change to Chill* program to promote youth mental well-being and resiliency
- Increase membership of the ACCFC Community Resilience Committee

In partnership with Bilal Oromo Dawa Center (BODC), Oromo Resource Center of Minnesota (ORC), and Allina Health, ACCFC’s Community Resilience Committee (CRC) hosted a *Change to Chill* workshop which reached 27 Oromo youth and 3 young adults. Cultural leaders provided input to Allina on how to adapt the workshop to ensure it would be culturally responsive. Youth learned about *Change to Chill*, practiced breathing and other calming exercises, and received Calm Down Kits they could bring home to use themselves or share with others. The kits contained a tip sheet for parents explaining how to use the kit’s tools to help their children reduce anxiety, manage stress, and calm themselves. ACCFC contracted with Oromo community members to shop for and prepare sambusas for participating youth, and an Oromo videographer filmed portions of the workshop as well as interviews with participants and community leaders. Partners hope to use the film to dispel stigma related to discussing mental health in the Oromo community, share tips for managing stress and reducing anxiety, and promote potential future workshops. ACCFC also contracted with a mental health professional to attend the workshop and provide supports in a “chill zone” to any participants triggered by the workshop topics. Watch a short video taken during the *Change to Chill* event at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AiB95hEjsQ8>

Youth paid attention to the presenter, readily engaged in the activities, and participated with thoughtful comments during conversations. Food was prepared by community members. The youths’ eyes lit up when Oromo delicacies and other treats were unveiled!

Tammy Schmitz, Anoka County Children & Family Council

Robbinsdale Area Redesign Family Service Collaborative

- Develop a diverse group of Youth Ambassadors to create a Youth Resiliency Team
- Engage youth in various trainings about protective factor skills, leadership skills, and life skills

Health mentors at Armstrong High School and Cooper High School helped identify 18 youth interns to serve as Student Resiliency Ambassadors. National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Minnesota delivered *Ending the Silence* suicide awareness and prevention training to the Ambassadors, and FamilyWise Services presented NEAR Science (Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs, and Resilience) training adapted for youth. A BIPOC School-Linked Mental Health (SLMH) provider attended all trainings as a resource in the event students were triggered by the training content. NAMI Minnesota was able to deliver the training at no cost to Robbinsdale Area Redesign. This allowed using the micro grant to build on efforts started the previous fiscal year. Local African American author, Lehman Riley, was invited to share his Papa Lemon Book 8, *Bullying: A Choice with Consequences*, on bullying with 5th grade classrooms that had been exhibiting bullying behaviors. Student Resiliency Ambassadors and the youth they mentor, as well as the 95 5th graders, received custom made lemon

stress balls printed with “Student Resiliency Ambassador.” The stress balls serve as a tangible reminder to students of what they learned about resilience and peer support.

During one of the [Papa Lemon sessions], a female fifth grader asked Mr. Riley, “Will you be able to attend my 5th grade graduation, please? I really would like you there when I graduate from 5th grade.” Of course, he said yes and attended. She needed his people power there for her in what she was expressing as an important date for her.

Melodie Hanson, Robbinsdale Redesign Family Service Collaborative

Lessons Learned

Leadership Expansion

- **Diversifying leadership in community resilience efforts.** ACCFC’s CRC shared that Oromo community members stressed the importance of keeping promises. Some teachers, assistants, and others expressed interest in learning more about the committee and Community Resilience Plan before signing on as members.
- **Supporting youth leaders.** Oromo leaders invited a local Oromo high school student in Anoka County to help plan the *Change to Chill* workshop. Youth participating in the workshop who were interviewed for the video shared their perspectives for improving future workshops. Robbinsdale Student Resiliency Ambassadors, along with their health mentors, selected the training they were interested in completing.

Community Collaboration/Coming Together

- **Collaborating authentically to build trust.** ACCFC’s CRC shared lessons learned, such as being aware of holidays like Ramadan when planning activities and whenever possible contract with members of the community of focus to fulfill paid roles. They noted that Allina Health’s demonstration of respect for cultural differences helped build some credibility with Oromo leaders. The CRC also acknowledged that, for the Oromo community, energy is split between meeting basic needs versus engaging in “extras” like workshops. Oromo partners suggested engaging with imams at other Twin Cities mosques to gain their support. Robbinsdale Area Redesign identified an African American SLMH provider to attend trainings and provide support to Ambassadors, and brought in a local African American author to connect with 5th graders. Health mentors in Robbinsdale schools have helped bridge a trusting pathway to supporting LGBTQ+ youth who hope to educate their peers on harassment they have faced at school.

Shared Learning

- **Adapting training to be age appropriate and culturally appropriate.** ACCFC’s CRC noted that mental illness is a taboo subject for many in the Oromo community—community leaders provided guidance on using language related to managing stress, reducing anxiety, and increasing mental wellbeing. Robbinsdale Redesign worked with FamilyWise Services to adapt the NEAR Science training for youth. The virtual training was not as well received as hoped, and may require more refining with youth input.
- **Engaging parents.** Due to limitations with the physical space in Anoka County, the *Change to Chill* workshop could not accommodate both youth and parents. Community partners want to include parents at future events. Robbinsdale is working on developing a resiliency section for parents on the school district’s website, as well as developing sessions for parents on restorative language and how to support your child in bullying situations or when concerns about substance use arise.

- **Building on NEAR Science training.** Robbinsdale Area Redesign shared that continuing to train more community members in NEAR Science over time can create a common framework and language for understanding, embracing, and adapting community resilience planning. The school district is developing a comprehensive plan to continue training all new staff in NEAR Science and restorative practices.

Results-Based Decision Making

- **Engaging resiliency partners in evaluation.** Interviews with leaders and partners plus surveys of youth and adult workshop participants in Anoka County revealed an interest in hosting more workshops, and youth interest in sharing what they learned with others. Robbinsdale Area Redesign and FamilyWise Services held a follow-up session with adult mentors who attended the NEAR Science training to gather input on future adaptations for youth.

Implement Strategies to Enhance Protective/Resilience Factors and Prevent/Reduce ACEs

- **Hands-on tools to help young people manage stress and anxiety.** ACCFC CRC's Calm Down Kits with parent tip sheets and Robbinsdale Redesign's lemon stress balls both equip people with tools they can use themselves and share with others.
- **Skills-based learning.** In addition to the more tangible tools disseminated by both grantees, youth gained skills related to self-regulation, coping, and how to connect with and provide support to peers. During the next school year, Robbinsdale Area Redesign plans to build Student Resiliency Ambassadors' restorative practices skills.

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