

1 Introduced by Committee on Human Services

2 Date:

3 Subject: Human services; adverse childhood experiences; work group

4 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the

5 Adverse Childhood Experiences Working Group.

6 An act relating to building resilience for individuals experiencing adverse  
7 childhood experiences

8 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

9 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

10 The General Assembly finds that:

11 (1) Adversity in childhood has a direct impact on an individual's health  
12 outcomes and social functioning. The cumulative effects of multiple adverse  
13 childhood experiences (ACEs) have even more profound public health and  
14 societal implications. ACEs include physical, emotional, and sexual abuse;  
15 neglect; food and financial insecurity; living with a person experiencing mental  
16 illness, substance use disorder, or both; experiencing or witnessing domestic  
17 violence; and having divorced parents or an incarcerated parent.

18 (2) The ACE questionnaire contains ten categories of questions for  
19 adults pertaining to abuse, neglect, and family dysfunction during childhood.

20 It is used to measure an adult's exposure to traumatic stressors in childhood.

1 Based on a respondent’s answers to the questionnaire, an ACE score is  
2 calculated, which is the total number of ACE categories reported as  
3 experienced by a respondent.

4 (3) ACEs are common in Vermont. One in eight Vermont children have  
5 experienced three or more ACEs, the most common being divorced or  
6 separated parents, food and housing insecurity, and having lived with someone  
7 with a substance use disorder or mental health condition. Children with three  
8 or more ACEs have higher odds of failing to engage and flourish in school.

9 (4) The impact of ACEs in Vermont is evident through the rise in  
10 caseloads in the Department for Children and Families, the acceleration of the  
11 opioid epidemic, which is both driving and affected by family dysfunction, and  
12 rising health costs associated with adult chronic illness.

13 (5) The impact of ACEs are felt across all socioeconomic boundaries.

14 (6) The earlier in life an intervention occurs for an individual who has  
15 experienced ACEs, the more likely that intervention is to be successful.

16 (7) There are at least 17 nationally recognized models shown to be  
17 effective in lowering the risk for child abuse and neglect, improving maternal  
18 and child health, and promoting child develop and school readiness.

19 (8) The General Assembly understands that people who have  
20 experienced adverse childhood experiences can build resilience and can  
21 succeed in leading happy, healthy lives.

1       Sec. 2. ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES; WORKING GROUP

2           (a) Creation. There is created the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)  
3       Working Group for the purpose of investigating, cataloguing, and analyzing  
4       existing resources to mitigate childhood trauma, identify populations served,  
5       and examine structures to build resiliency.

6           (b) Membership. The Working Group shall be composed of the following  
7       members:

8           (1) four members of the House, not all from the same political party,  
9       who shall be appointed by the Speaker, including:

10           (A) the Chair of the House Committee on Human Services or  
11       designee;

12           (B) the Chair of the House Committee on Health Care or designee;

13           (C) the Chair of the House Committee on Education or designee; and

14           (D) a current member of the House at large; and

15           (2) four members of the Senate, not all from the same political party,  
16       who shall be appointed by the Committee on Committees, including:

17           (A) the Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare or  
18       designee;

19           (B) the Chair of the Senate Committee on Education or designee; and

20           (C) two current members of the Senate at large.

1       (c)(1) Powers and duties. In light of current research and the fiscal  
2       environment, the Working Group shall analyze existing resources related to  
3       building resilience in early childhood and propose appropriate structures for  
4       advancing the most evidence-based or evidence-informed and cost-effective  
5       approaches to serve children experiencing trauma, including the following:

6               (A) identifying by service area existing intervention programs for  
7       children and families and those populations served by each program, including  
8       the effectiveness of identified programs;

9               (B) determining whether there are any statewide or regional gaps in  
10       services for interventions on behalf of children and families;

11              (C) exploring previous and ongoing initiatives within the Agencies of  
12       Human Services and of Education that address trauma, including any gains  
13       achieved; and

14              (D) considering, if necessary, a legislative proposal that targets the  
15       use of evidence-based or evidence-informed and cost-effective interventions  
16       for children and families based upon the strength and weaknesses of existing  
17       services.

18       (2) The Working Group shall take testimony from a diverse array of  
19       stakeholders, including:

20              (A) the Secretary of Education or designee;

21              (B) the Commissioner of Mental Health or designee;

1            (C) a representative from each of the Department for Children and  
2            Families’ Divisions of Child Development, of Economic Services, and of  
3            Family Services;

4            (D) a representative of the parent-child centers;

5            (E) a representative of the Nurse-Family Partnership;

6            (F) a representative of a Head Start program in Vermont;

7            (G) a representative of the Commission on Psychological Trauma  
8            established by 2000 Acts and Resolves No. 132;

9            (H) a representative of Vermont’s Family-engaged, Adoption  
10           Competent, Trauma-informed Services;

11           (I) a representative of the Home Visiting Alliance;

12           (J) a representative of Vermont Care Partners with experience  
13           pertaining to children’s mental health;

14           (K) a representative of the Vermont Child Health Improvement  
15           Program;

16           (L) a representative of Building Bright Futures;

17           (M) a representative of Prevent Child Abuse Vermont; and

18           (N) any other person or persons with information relevant to the  
19           Working Group’s charge.

1       (d)(1) Assistance. The Working Group shall have the administrative,  
2       technical, and legal assistance of the Office of Legislative Council. The Joint  
3       Fiscal Office shall provide staff support to the Working Group as necessary.

4           (2) On or before August 15, 2017, the Agency of Human Services, in  
5       consultation with the Agency of Education, shall provide existing data and  
6       background materials relevant to the responsibilities of the Working Group to  
7       the Office of Legislative Council, including a spreadsheet by service area of  
8       those programs or services that receive State or federal funds to provide  
9       intervention services for children and families and the eligibility criteria for  
10       each program and service.

11       (e) Proposed legislation. On or before December 1, 2017, the Working  
12       Group shall submit any recommended legislation to the House Committee on  
13       Human Services and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare.

14       (f) Meetings.

15           (1) The Chair of the House Committee on Human Services or designee  
16       shall call the first meeting of the Working Group to occur on or before  
17       September 1, 2017.

18           (2) The Working Group shall select a chair from among its members at  
19       the first meeting.

20           (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

21           (4) The Working Group shall cease to exist on January 1, 2018.

1        (g) Reimbursement. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the  
2        General Assembly, legislative members of the Working Group shall be entitled  
3        to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses pursuant to 2 V.S.A.  
4        § 406 for no more than six meetings.

5        (h) Appropriation. The sum of \$ 9,840.00 is appropriated to the General  
6        Assembly from the General Fund in fiscal year 2018 for per diem  
7        compensation and reimbursement of expenses for members of the Working  
8        Group.

9        Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

10        This act shall take effect on July 1, 2017.