

Prevent Child Abuse Iowa - Connections Matter®

Connections Matter® is an evidence-informed curriculum and awareness resource designed to engage community members in building caring connections to improve physical, mental, and financial well-being. Research shows that communities connected through caring relationships have better physical and mental health, increased workplace productivity and school success, and less crime and homelessness. Greater social connectedness also strengthens protective factors that reduce the risk of child abuse or neglect.

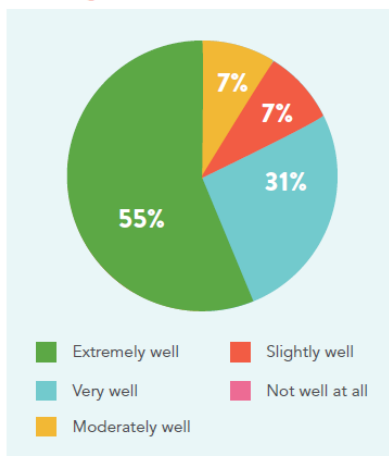
The Connections Matter® initiative is led by Prevent Child Abuse Iowa in collaboration with partners statewide. It responds to data that reveals child abuse and household dysfunction is common among Iowans and a major indicator of higher rates of chronic disease, mental illness, risky behaviors and reduced life expectancy among adults.



Connections Matter® is a prevention response to the landmark research of the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. The raise the level of commitment to child abuse prevention in Iowa communities.

Connections Matter® and Prevent Child Abuse Iowa have embraced the growing need to be involved in cross-sector training and programmatic change. Trainings and workshops have been held in numerous school districts, Area Education Associations (AEA), faith communities, community groups, social service agencies, and most recently establishing a Connections Matter® module for the business community. Individuals and larger institutions have realized the expanding need for healthy mental health in all levels of the workforce. Pilot groups for the business sector are in process of being identified and constructed.

FIGURE 5
CM Training Prepared Me to Share the Information



The Connections Matter® curriculum is meant to be easily digested in a two-hour workshop for general populations while offering a continuum of services dependent on the need of the group. The more extensive day long trainings offer audiences extensive research on brain science, the implications of toxic stress on the brain, tools and protective factors, and the opportunity to engage in a strategic planning implementation process for their community sector.

All content in the Connections Matter® curriculum is evidence based. As a training tool, Connections Matter® is collecting data to determine whether the training produces change in behavior - the next stage to become an evidence based curriculum. Connections Matter® is currently is evidence informed.

Information below is found in “Prevent Child Abuse Iowa: Connections Matter® – A Response to ACEs Evaluation Report, Robin Galloway, PH.D. Jeanne Connelly, MS Research Institute for Studies in Education E005 Lagomarcino Hall Iowa State University Ames, IA 50011

“It should be noted that the evaluation overwhelmingly indicated that the culture of each group of people demands that the materials and practices be adapted appropriately to be effective. This surfaced as an indicator that should continue to be a goal for working to spread the Connections Matter® message with diverse groups of people. PCA Iowa devoted extensive time and resources to the process of adapting materials to serve the uniqueness of each group. Cultural competence should be considered at each step of the process. In the future PCA Iowa plans to continue to focus on culturally competent practices.

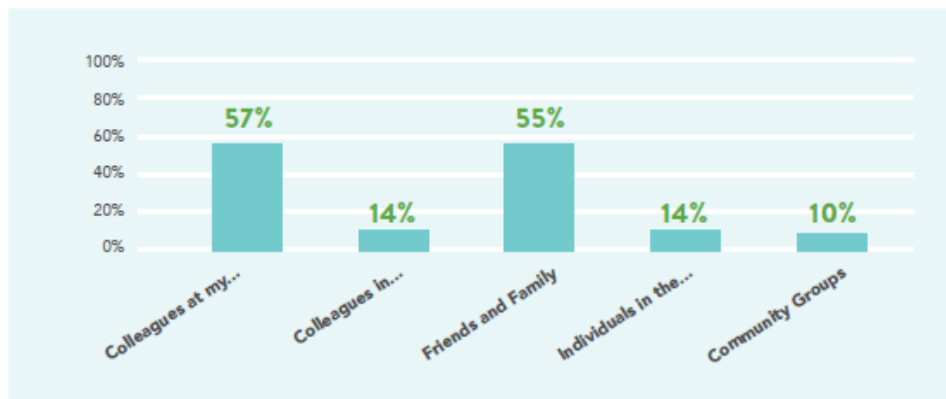
Participants offered positive feedback and described the ways they planned to use the information professionally and personally: “It makes you stop and think about how your interaction with anyone, whether it is a short one or long one, makes a difference. I have been trying to be aware of my interactions with others in my personal and professional life.”

“Information would be interesting and valuable to many sectors in the community, not just social service providers.”

“I would like to show this to our staff. It is important for staff to realize how the connections they have with students, community members, and coalition groups really do have an impact.”

“I have already applied thoughts that came to me during the presentation to my personal relationships.”

FIGURE 3
Percentage of People Trained Who Have Shared CM Information with...



Feedback regarding what they gained from the training and how they planned to use the information:

- Utilize the information professionally: with staff, adapting current practices, extending practices to include new interaction patterns and new people
- Utilize the information personally: being aware of the effects of trauma, recognizing and supporting resiliency, supporting others
- Address the need to work as a community: engaging stakeholders, leadership groups, families
- Use strategies for how to share the information effectively and interactively