



# Keeping Children Strong

As of December 2017, there were more than 47,000 children involved with Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). These children, approximately 20% under the age of 3, have experienced abuse or neglect and most often, lived in challenging family circumstances with parents struggling with addiction and/or mental health issues.

"These traumatic and adverse childhood experiences lead to a greater likelihood of poor child well-being, including behavioral and emotional problems," said Mary McGeown, MSPCC Executive Director. "We know by intervening with these children earlier and providing effective support to their caregivers, we can prevent negative outcomes and improve their health and happiness."

With a goal to help DCF improve the lives of children in their care, MSPCC recently was awarded a grant from The Boston Foundation to develop a pilot program to improve access to high-quality, timely mental health assessments and treatment for infants and young children entering the DCF system.

"In designing this service, we aim to impact children's placement stability, school readiness and school success, and emotional outcomes," said MSPCC Director of Prevention Services Meghan McGuirk, LMHC.

MSPCC will partner with DCF, the Massachusetts Association for Infant Mental Health, Massachusetts Head Start Association, and Massachusetts Alliance for Families, to develop a system for prioritizing delivery of evidence-based, trauma-focused screening, assessment, and interventions to infants and toddlers who are involved with DCF.

The model will be piloted in Boston. MSPCC's mental health consultation staff will engage caregivers and administer assessments and initiate appropriate care, including services for biological parents and foster parents, and gather data to inform the evaluation of the model.

At the end of the pilot, we hope and expect to see trends indicating the efficacy of the approach to inform future service delivery.

While the program is in the development and pilot phases, MSPCC and its partners will advocate with state agencies, policy makers, providers, and their constituencies to educate them about the goals and impacts of the pilot.

Through education and engagement, we will build support for sustaining the model in Boston and for the advancement of strategies for statewide adoption.



**Massachusetts Society  
for the Prevention  
of Cruelty to Children**

From the Desk of



## Mary McGeown

### Dear Friends:

National news was flooded this summer with disturbing images of immigrant children separated from and crying for their parents while being held in chain-link cages. Recognizing this practice is incompatible with our mission, MSPCC joined organizations from all fifty states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico in protest of the U.S. practice of separating immigrant families and exposing children to harm. While the images are difficult for us to watch, for those children, the consequences may be devastating. The traumatic upheaval, confusion, and sense of loss these children experienced from the separation may have lifelong effects.

The term ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences) has gained recognition in public health and child welfare over the past two decades. Studies find that traumatic experiences in childhood cast a long shadow into adulthood, even when a child is too young to remember the events clearly. ACEs range from events as common as parent divorce, to graver issues such as physical or sexual abuse and incarceration of a parent. Situations of abuse and neglect before the age of five correlate with increased risks of heart disease, depression, diabetes, drug use, shortened life expectancy, and countless other health issues.

MSPCC works to mitigate the long-term effects of ACEs. We have a saying at MSPCC that 'prevention is our middle name' and it is at the heart of our work with children and families and our public policy advocacy. We know that children grow up best in families and our work is devoted to keeping children safely with their families, whenever possible. As a nation, we cannot lose sight of our responsibility to keep children physically and emotionally safe and healthy. Preventing ACEs should be everyone's top priority.

**Mary A. McGeown**  
Executive Director

MSPCC NEWSLETTER

FALL 2018

# Healthy Cooking for Healthy Families™

This spring, participants of the Healthy Families™ program were treated to a 6-week-long course on healthy meal preparation by Cooking Matters®, a program that helps families shop for and cook healthy meals on a budget. Staff from Cooking Matters® came to MSPCC's Boston office and taught these young parents skills they need to make delicious and nutritious meals for their little ones.

The course taught young parents to make culturally-appropriate, nutritious meals on a budget, shop in a grocery store, and decode product labels. MSPCC provided transportation and childcare during the classes to make them more accessible to young parents. In addition, each week each child received a developmentally-appropriate book and gift, one lucky participant won a raffle prize, and dads who attended received a specific gift. Every week, each family went home with a bag of healthy groceries to help them recreate the meals at home.

Healthy Families™ partners with young first time moms and dads to help them tackle parenting challenges, find community resources, and support them from pregnancy through their child's 3rd birthday. By teaching important parenting skills and providing consistent encouragement, MSPCC aims to prevent situations of abuse and neglect from ever occurring in a family. Through opportunities like learning to cook healthy meals for their family, MSPCC gave the Cooking Matters® participants skills they can use as they work to be dedicated and nurturing parents.

**Healthy Families™ is a program of the Children's Trust™. Cooking Matters® is one of Share Our Strength's campaigns to end child hunger in the United States.**



# Fostering Resilience: How ACEs Impact Youth in Foster Care

More than 200 foster, adoptive, and kinship parents as well as social workers, advocates, and state policy leaders are expected to attend the 2018 Foster Parent Conference hosted by MSPCC in partnership with the Department of Children and Families and the Massachusetts Alliance for Families (MAFF).

The day will feature a keynote address by Heather Forkey, MD, on how we can harness new research to prevent and/or recognize the effect of trauma to support children and youth in foster care. Dr. Forkey is Associate Professor of Pediatrics at UMASS Medical School, Director of the Foster Children Evaluation Service (FACES), and Chief of the Division of Child Protection for UMass Memorial Children's Medical Center. She is nationally recognized for her clinical work with foster children. [Learn more at mspcc.org/maff-2018/](http://mspcc.org/maff-2018/)

## THE ACES STUDY

From 1995 to 1997, the first study on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) uncovered how ACEs are strongly related to development of risk factors for disease and to well-being throughout an individual's life.

## THE EXPERIENCES

The first study identifies ten ACEs in three categories: abuse, neglect, and household challenges

### ABUSE

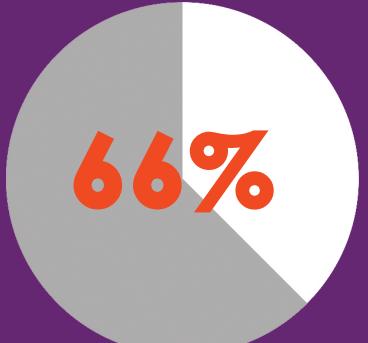
- Emotional Abuse
- Physical Abuse
- Sexual Abuse

### NEGLECT

- Emotional Neglect
- Physical Neglect

### HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES

- Mother Treated Violently
- Household Substance Abuse
- Household Mental Illness
- Parental Separation or Divorce
- Incarcerated Household Member



66%

of adults reported  
at least one adverse  
childhood experience

## PREVENTING ACES

With the right resources, abuse, neglect, and most ACEs are preventable. Providing supports to parents and caregivers is the best way to prevent the long-term effects.



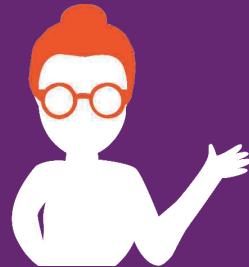
High-quality  
childcare



Mental illness and  
substance use treatment



Parenting and  
pregnancy supports



Young parent  
training programs



# BABY SHOWERS

**Help MSPCC provide baby showers for all the parents in our care!**

Most new parents excitedly await their first baby shower to celebrate their newborns and supply them with all the baby essentials. You can ensure that families of MSPCC have the same celebration by donating new baby and toddler items.

**Diapers**

**Clothes**

**Shoes**

**Toys**

**Strollers**

**Car Seats**

**Furniture**

**Cribs**

To learn more, contact Emily DiCarlo, at [edicarlo@mspcc.org](mailto:edicarlo@mspcc.org).

# Comfort Kids

This summer, Jordan and Samantha Hamelsky were together selected as one of this year's winners of a Myra Kraft Community MVP Award, given by the New England Patriots Foundation, for their years of volunteer work on behalf of MSPCC. In 2013, Jordan learned that a friend of hers, adopted from the Ukraine, had arrived in America with all of her belongings in a single paper bag. Jordan, who was 10 years old at the time, and Samantha, who was 8, were so moved by their friend's story that they decided they wanted to help foster children. Since that time, the girls have made it their mission to provide duffel bags filled with new clothes, toys, and toiletries for foster children.

**"For more than five years, Jordan and Samantha Hamelsky have been a best friend to more than 700 children in foster care," said Mary McGeown. "Sadly, children who are abused or neglected are removed from their homes in a moment's notice, often with little but the clothes on their backs. Jordan and Samantha took up a cause to provide foster children with duffel bags filled with necessities. At a time when life is chaotic, overwhelming, and frightening for a child, Jordan and Samantha have given them something to call their own."**

Thank you Jordan and Samantha for all you have done for children of MSPCC!



FROM LEFT: Robert Kraft; Jordan, Samantha, and Eli Hamelsky; and Andre Tippett



Comfort Kids bags, complete with clothes, pajamas, toiletries, a blanket, and a toy.

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## Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

### Locations

#### Boston

3815 Washington Street #2  
Boston, MA 02130  
617.983.5800

#### Holyoke

9 Sullivan Road  
Holyoke, MA 01040  
413.532.9446

#### Lawrence

15 Union Street  
Building E, Suite 115  
Lawrence, MA 01840  
978.682.9222

#### Lowell

151 Warren Street  
Lowell, MA 01852  
978.937.3087

#### Worcester

108 Belmont Street  
Worcester, MA 01602  
508.753.2967

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### Invest in MSPCC Through the Mary Ellen Society

The Mary Ellen Society honors supporters whose generosity via bequests or life income gifts ensures MSPCC's work will continue for years to come. Mary Ellen Society members receive invitations to all MSPCC events and donor appreciation gatherings.

If you have included MSPCC in your estate plans, or would like to learn more, please contact Melanie Lima, Director of Development, at 617-587-1587, or via email at [mlima@mspcc.org](mailto:mlima@mspcc.org).

### FOSTER CARE CONFERENCE

#### October 19, 2018

This fall, MSPCC, in partnership with DCF and MAFF, will host the biannual Massachusetts Foster Care Conference in Marlborough. This conference is an opportunity for foster parents to gain a deeper understanding of the issues impacting children in foster care, to learn strategies to support and care for children, and to network with foster parents from across the state. To learn more, contact Jake Murtaugh, at [jmurtaugh@mspcc.org](mailto:jmurtaugh@mspcc.org).

### THANKSGIVING DRIVE

#### Fall 2018

MSPCC is collecting donations in an effort to provide a Thanksgiving feast to more than 200 of our families in need! We are looking for donations of gift cards, cash, and non-perishable foods. Learn how you can help at [mspcc.org/thanksgiving](http://mspcc.org/thanksgiving) or contact Julie Clerc at [jclerc@mspcc.org](mailto:jclerc@mspcc.org).