

# Healthy Sussex

COMING TOGETHER FOR A HEALTHY SUSSEX COUNTY

July 2021

## SUPPORTING PARTNERS

As we navigate the new normal of transitioning through a global pandemic it will be important that anchor organizations remain steadfast in the work they have and are doing for the community. Now is the time to ensure we continue to put into practice the learnings this last year has taught us and to create stronger foundational supports for each other and the families we serve. If COVID taught us anything it is that collaboration is pivotal, and relationships are the cornerstone of our community in good times and in bad. It reminded us that we cannot wait for crisis to occur to ensure we are good working partners. Sussex County Health Coalition will continue to SUPPORT our partners as we boldly move forward towards 2022. That support will include:

Creation of and providing a **S**upportive environment for our partners is Sussex County through our coalition meetings. **U**tilizing best practices and political connections to bring innovative ideas and scalable initiatives into our rural community. **P**rovide **P**artner engagement opportunities so that natural and targeted collaborations will occur. **O**rganize initiatives and work streams to reduce redundancy and create a culture that maximizes resources. Facilitate and garner **R**esources to increase capacity for our partners and the families they serve in Sussex County. Provide **T**rainning in areas where



awareness and knowledge are critical to the health and welfare of our partners and the individuals they serve.

We will continue to strive for access to mental health/addictions services as well as equity in health care and foster initiatives that drive community cohesion! We will work on projects with partners that are directed towards alleviating poverty and increase economic mobility! We will drive the importance of Youth Prevention and support.

We have a lot of work to do standing beside our partners. Please continue to be a part of the journey!



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Peggy M. Geisler".

Peggy M. Geisler  
Executive Director

**ACCESSIBLE DIGITAL LITERACY INSTRUCTION** coming soon through the Delaware Division of Libraries, in partnership with Literacy Delaware. **STAY TUNED** for more information on how to sign up, possible locations in your area and more!

# BUILDING TRAUMA INFORMED COMMUNITIES

## A Best Practice and Systemic Change



Debra Berke

by *Debra Berke, Ph.D., CFLE;*  
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More and more, organizations, institutions, coalitions, and systems are turning to a trauma-informed approach (TIA) to best strengthen and support our communities. Collectively, we

are recognizing the prevalence of trauma (1 in 6 people have had 4 or more ACEs) and we are understanding its impact (negative effects on health, well-being, and life opportunities) on people from all walks of life, all geographic regions, and all races and cultures (CDC, 2021).

**Adapting a trauma-informed approach is not only a current trend, and certainly a best practice, but it is a change of worldview from “What is wrong with you?” to “What happened to you?”**

The origins of this concept can be seen in the Sanctuary Model of Trauma-Informed Organizational Change (Bloom, & Yanosy Sreedhar, 2008) which acknowledges the impact of trauma on the individual and family while also implementing procedures and policies to prevent future re-traumatization, including the concept of universal precautions or treating everyone as if trauma has occurred.

**A trauma-informed approach is based around 6 principles—safety, trustworthiness and transparency, peer support, collaboration and mutuality, empowerment, voice, and choice, and cultural, historical, and gender issues** (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014a; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014b). These principles can be applied to any setting and have been incorporated into fields such as health care, social work, criminal justice, and education. Healing, growth, and resilience are the focus and anticipated outcomes of utilizing these principles.

Within communities, the question becomes how do social context and environmental factors such as violence and poverty impact functioning and resilience (DeCandia, Guarino, & Clervil, 2014) and how can we implement the 6 TIA principles to address trauma? Two successful adaptations of these principles to broader

communities can be found in the BRIDGE Housing Corporation’s work in San Francisco and that of Trauma Matters Delaware, a statewide public-private, nonprofit backbone organization that advocates for research on trauma, the recognition of its impact, and the adoption of trauma informed practices and policies.

The BRIDGE Housing Corporation’s Trauma-Informed Community Building Model (n.d.) is a research-based model that applies trauma-informed interventions to strengthen communities. Using a holistic approach, they have developed strategies that work to reduce the negative effects of trauma on community-building work at all levels—individual, interpersonal, community, and systems.

Traditional community-building strategies have encountered trauma-related challenges, such as diminished levels of trust and social cohesion, an absence of stability and reliability, a lack of hopeful long-term goals, and an overwhelming amount of community needs that require intensive support and resources (The Bridge Housing Corporation, n.d.). Their trauma-informed approach applies 4 principles to community building efforts: do no harm, acceptance, community empowerment, and reflective process. Their outcome? A community ready to engage in and benefit from trauma-informed community development (The Bridge Housing Corporation, n.d.).

Trauma Matters Delaware was founded in 2013 by a small group of advocates. In 2018, Governor Carney issued Executive Order #24 which prioritized trauma-informed efforts within the state of Delaware,

driving Delaware to become a trauma-responsive state. **Trauma Matters Delaware** has 3 workgroups focused on a holistic, trauma-informed approach for the entire state. The **Community Healing Workgroup** supports community organizations through technical assistance and trauma-informed development opportunities. The **Higher Education Workgroup** helps institutes of higher education become trauma-informed while also helping them to prepare a trauma-informed future



(continued)

workforce. The **Primary/Secondary/Vicarious Trauma and Resilience Workgroup** increases awareness of and promotes practices to prevent or mitigate exposure to primary, secondary, and vicarious trauma and promote resilience in our Delaware workforce. This is a holistic, community-based approach to building a trauma-responsive state (Trauma Matters Delaware, n.d.).

These are just two examples of how a trauma-informed approach can build trauma-informed communities. The foundational principles are there to be utilized. All that is needed is some creativity, community voice, and a willing coalition.

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## SCHC ANNOUNCES PREMIER PARTNERSHIP WITH DELAWARE ALLIANCE FOR NONPROFIT ADVANCEMENT



Sheila Bravo

by *Sheila Bravo, MBA, Ph.D., President & CEO of DANA (Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement)*

DANA, the Delaware Alliance for Nonprofit Advancement is thrilled to partner with Sussex County Health Coalition (SCHC) by opening a Southern Delaware office. These are incredible times filled with

opportunities but also many challenges for nonprofits. Sussex County nonprofits have been a life line for so many, lifting their well-being in so many different ways – from finding affordable housing, offering food, to lifting our spirits through song and dance. And it is because of this diverse set of organizations that Sussex County is such an attractive place to live. We are seeing immense housing growth, and yet there still so many left behind. This means that Sussex County nonprofits have more people to serve, need more resources, and may need to find new ways to operate.

DANA's exists so nonprofits can have the resources they need to operate as efficiently and effectively as possible.

DANA provides training, consulting, and ton of resources for its member nonprofits. We focus on the needs of nonprofit leadership (boards and executive directors), while also provide useful tips to assist nonprofits in their sustainability practices. DANA consultants provide expertise in a range of areas including: fundraising, strategic planning, board development, organizational development, leadership coaching, financial management, and public policy. We also serve as an advocate voice for Delaware nonprofits at the federal, state, and sometimes even county level.

Many members of SCHC are also members of DANA, which means they can access many of our resources at little no cost. DANA is continuing to update its learning material, and tailor its training and consulting to your needs. We hope to see you via ZOOM or, better yet, in person soon. This summer, DANA's Georgetown office is open Mondays and Fridays if you want to stop by. Other hours are by appointment. We will announce our fall schedule soon.



## A VIDEO GAME DISCUSSION WORTH HAVING

by Judy McCormick, Director of Youth Prevention Services, DE Council on Gambling Problems



In January 2021, the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems (DCGP) launched their virtual presentation, “Kids, Video Games, and Gambling” for middle and high school students all across Delaware. The virtual presentation via Zoom has been essential in promoting DCGP’s “Protect Your Brain” message during the Covid-19 pandemic by fostering understanding of the potential dangers of the rapidly developing video gaming landscape and its convergence with the gambling industry.

The youth prevention team at the Delaware Council on Gambling Problems wants kids (and adults) to realize the importance of playing age-appropriate games, to recognize some of the signs of potential gambling and gaming addiction, and to also understand how some of the embedded gambling themes within many video games can be potentially dangerous for the teenage brain.

The data so far in 2021 is startling: roughly 40 percent of middle and high school students in Delaware who were surveyed play games for over 4 hours a day. Another 25 percent play games for 3 to 4 hours a day. This does not include remote learning, social media apps, or general internet use.

**According to one large scale survey of 14,000 respondents, teens who reported five hours or more of video games or digital use daily had a significantly higher risk of sadness, suicidal thoughts and suicide planning (1).**

Many video games, such as Grand Theft Auto 5, Red Dead Redemption, and Gacha Games, feature gambling mechanics such as casino games and other digitalized random reward systems like loot boxes. The “digital dopamine drip” that is produced by responding to phone notifications, social media likes, texts, and stimulating graphics and mechanics in video games are what can keep us glued to the screen. Even casinos in gambling towns like Las Vegas and Atlantic City have also turned to video game-themed gambling machines to attract

a younger demographic and to capitalize on a trending revenue stream.

Amanda Mattei, a health teacher at Al DuPont High School who helped pilot this year’s virtual program, feels that parents should focus now more than ever on their child’s gaming behavior. “This is a topic that parents need to be mindful of because you may think they are at home working on their school work remotely but they could be gaming all day long for four, six, ten hours a day. Without having any knowledge of that I just think it’s very important for parents to be aware of the dangers of gaming.”

Cam Adair, the founder and CEO of gamequitters.com, and a former gaming addict himself, knows there are carefully built in motives for kids to play video games. Games offer a temporary escape from issues that could be stressful or cause anxiety, provide opportunities to socialize and create a sense of community, feature constant measurable growth, and games are a challenge which provides a goal to work towards.

However, not all video games and gaming behaviors should be viewed as negative or unproductive. According to the Centers for Control and Disease Prevention (CDC), “When supervised by an adult, kids who play learning (educational) video games can develop their socio-emotional, cognitive, and other health developmental skills.” Games like Minecraft, Gamestar Mechanic, Animal Genius, and Math Blaster are great games that can boost performance in preparation for STEM programs as well.

A BBC News investigation revealed that China’s most famous esports player, Jian Zihao or ‘Mad Dog’, recently retired from professional gaming at the age of 23, citing type 2 diabetes and other health problems resulting from a fatty diet, lack of physical activity and the high stress of continuous gaming (1).

Other signs of problematic gaming are increased tolerance (needing to play more to achieve satisfaction), irritability when not playing, being consumed with thoughts of gaming, loss of sleep, school/ job struggles. Many of these signs of potential gaming disorder are the same diagnostic criteria for gambling disorder and drug or alcohol addiction.



**If you or anyone you know may be struggling with gambling or video gaming, the DCGP has trained professionals who can help with both issues. Call 888-850-8888 or go online to DEProblemGambling.org to get the help you need today.**

(1) Data provided by Intenta.Digital, 2021

# READ, READ, READ



Vibha Sanwal, MD

**By Megan Hayes, DE American Academy of Pediatrics, Executive Director**

The Delaware Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (DEAAP) is a professional association of pediatricians committed to promoting optimal physical, mental and social health and well-being for all infants, children, adolescents and young adults in Delaware. In support of its mission, the DEAAP recently established an Early Literacy Committee (ELC) tasked with the goal of engaging and supporting Delaware primary care pediatricians to promote early literacy from birth to five years. The DEAAP ELC's efforts are guided by its vision that "beginning at birth, every Delaware child is read to every day."

To achieve this vision, the DEAAP Early Literacy Committee has committed to assisting community pediatric practices to implement the evidence-based, national pediatric literacy program, Reach Out and Read (ROR).

Reach Out and Read's mission is to give young children a foundation for success by incorporating books into pediatric care and encouraging families to read aloud together. Utilizing the ROR model of early childhood literacy promotion, primary care clinicians, as part of routine well-visits for young children, provide anticipatory guidance, developmentally-appropriate books and a literacy-rich environment to educate families on the critical importance of reading aloud. This evidence-based intervention model is considered the standard of care as recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics and follows Bright Futures health supervision guidelines. The ROR program addresses important social determinants of health and provides primary care clinicians the opportunity to observe fist-

hand fine and gross motor, cognitive, language, literacy, relational and social-emotional development. Research shows that participation in Reach Out and Read is associated with significant and positive changes in a child's literacy environment and development that result in improved language scores.

DEAAP Early Literacy Committee has partnered with the Sussex County Health Coalition (SCHC) and the Sussex Early Childhood Council (SECC) joint team of early childhood professionals comprised of programs, partners, and individuals in the community dedicated to making

a difference in the lives of children and families. DEAAP ELC, SCHC and SECC seek to promote early language and literacy development in children beginning in infancy to meet the shared goal of improving school readiness for all Delaware children. These efforts are in-line with the mission of the DEAAP and its Early Literacy Committee.

To further its shared goals DEAAP Early Literacy Committee, Sussex County Health Coalition and the Sussex Early Childhood Council have come together to support the implementation of the Reach Out and Read program at Rainbow Pediatrics in Sussex County, Delaware. This collaborative effort addresses the goals and objectives of the Early Child Comprehensive Systems (ECCS) impact grant which builds and implements comprehensive systems of care to support initiatives that promote positive early development and school success for young children.

Rainbow Pediatrics is very excited about this opportunity for their patients and their practice:

***"We are really very thankful for the funds to provide books for our patients at Rainbow Pediatrics. Our patients are so happy when we give them the books and we find every single patient, even as young as 15 months, flipping pages of the books while waiting for the provider."***

***Due to the pandemic kids are forced to spend more time online with online learning and parents are really appreciative when we give them books and encourage them to read story books. We believe that reading and, more essentially, access to good books is vital to every child's emotional, social and intellectual development. Many critical pathways are formed in a child's brain as they are growing. Reading strengthens these connections!"***

## SUSSEX RE-INVIGORATING ATTACK ADDICTION

by Dawn Hess-Fischer, atTack addiction, board member

atTack addiction is re-invigorating the Sussex Chapter and we need your help. Volunteer opportunities, event planning, education and awareness events will all be part of our mandate over the next several months.

We have established virtual monthly meetings and are working to do in-person meetings in the fall.

**If you are interested in participating, please contact [dawn.hess-fischer@attackaddiction.org](mailto:dawn.hess-fischer@attackaddiction.org).**



Dawn Hess-Fischer



Delaware Goes Purple has a new look this year. Stay tuned for new website, materials, events and opportunities!

## MEET THE FUNDER VIRTUAL UPDATE

### Todd Veale, Executive Director, Laffey-McHugh

Sussex County Health Coalition hosted another successful Meet the Funder in June with Laffey-McHugh.

Todd Veale joined the Laffey-McHugh Foundation as Executive Director in January 2019. He spent most of his career at MBNA America Bank, N.A. in several executive roles between 1991 and 2006.



The Laffey McHugh Foundation is a private non-profit foundation established in Delaware in 1959 by Alice Laffey McHugh, the only child of John P. Laffey, who was appointed the first Head of the DuPont Legal Department in 1902; her first cousin and closest friend, Gerardine Laffey Connolly; and Gerardine's husband, prominent attorney Arthur G. Connolly, Sr. They wanted to create a legacy of giving and support for the neediest people in the community.

### SCHC MISSION

The Sussex County Health Coalition exists to engage the entire community in collaborative family-focused effort to improve the health of children, youth and families in Sussex County.

### SCHC VISION

We envision a community in which our citizens and institutions (public, private, and not-for-profit) are actively engaged in community health promotion as a shared community good, and working together to create a cultural and physical environment which supports healthy lifestyles for our children and their families.

