



STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN





Since 1962, Arizona Town Hall has created solutions to complex problems by educating, engaging, connecting, and empowering Arizonans.

Community Town Halls and Future Leaders Town Halls (events held for high school and college students) allow a greater number of Arizonans to experience positive civic engagement. These programs also incubate solutions for statewide issues and develop a grassroots network of informed citizens ready to work together to maximize Arizona's potential.

To ensure informed discussion, Town Hall participants review background information developed by the Arizona Town Hall Research Committee.

Participants at the statewide Town Hall consider the information in the background report as well as recommendations from the various Community and Future Leaders Town Halls.

This publication is a summary of key points from the background report, the Community and Future Leaders Town Halls, and the report of recommendations developed at the Statewide Town Hall held November 14-16, 2019.

Completed Town Hall reports are published and made available to Arizona Town Hall members, elected officials (including the Arizona Legislature), public libraries, and the general public. Download digital copies, for free, online at www.aztownhall.org or call (602) 252-9600 to purchase a printed copy.



Participants of Panel Ocotillo at the 112th Statewide Town Hall

Top to Bottom: Participants Rosalva Zimmerman, Demetry Simonton, Virginia Watahomigie, Janet Garcia, Amanda Nelson, and Roy Dawson during panel discussions at the 112th Statewide Town Hall.

KEY POINTS FROM THE BACKGROUND REPORT

Read or download the complete background report at www.aztownhall.org

The prosperity and long-term success of Arizona depends on the healthy development of its children, who will become our future workers, decision-makers, and leaders. Family and child well-being are public health issues. Helping families and children to be happy, healthy, and resilient helps the community at large.

There are significant costs to society when children and families don't thrive. On average, the estimated lifetime cost of child maltreatment is about \$210,000 for each victim. This cost includes childhood health care costs, adult health care costs, and lost productivity.

Some of the best ways to help families are by engaging in activities that increase their protective factors: the characteristics or strengths of individuals and families or communities that help to reduce the risks and negative effects of traumatic or difficult situations.

Protective factors also help to reduce the effects of Adverse Childhood Experience.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that take place in children's lives, before age 18, that harm their developing brains and bodies so acutely that the effects show up decades later. Arizona has the highest rate in the nation for the percentage of children birth to 17 years who have experienced two or more ACEs.

- Recurrent physical abuse
- Recurrent emotional abuse
- Contact sexual abuse
- Alcohol and/or drug abuse in the household
- An incarcerated household member
- Someone in the household who was depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal
- Mother who was treated violently
- One or no parent
- Emotional or physical neglect

PROTECTIVE FACTORS

- Parental resilience: ability to manage stress and maintain functionality when confronted with challenges or trauma.
- Social connections: relationships with others that provide individuals with emotional support, friendship, and advice.

- Basic knowledge of both parenting and child development: knowing what a child needs at different developmental stages and having appropriate expectations.
- Concrete support in times of need: access to timely support such as monetary assistance, emergency child care assistance, or transportation.
- Social and emotional competence of children: a child's ability to interact in a positive way with others; their ability to communicate feelings and to self-regulate their behavior.

SNAPSHOT OF CHALLENGES FACING ARIZONA'S FAMILIES

- Twenty-four percent of Arizona children are in poverty compared to 19 percent of children at the national level.
- The national average of children in foster care is six per 1,000 children. In Arizona, the rate is ten per 1,000 children.
- According to the National Center for Education Statistics, Arizona's graduation rate for public high school students is 80 percent, which is less than the U.S. national average which is 84 percent.

FIVE FACTS ABOUT ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

1. ACEs are common; nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of adults have experienced at least one.
2. ACEs are associated with adult onset of chronic disease, such as cancer and heart disease, as well as mental illness, addictions, violence, and being a victim of violence.
3. ACEs don't occur alone. If you have one, there is an 87 percent chance that you have two or more.
4. The more ACEs you have, the greater the risk for chronic disease, mental illness, addictions, violence, and being a victim of violence. People with high ACE scores are more likely to be violent, to have more marriages, more broken bones, more drug prescriptions, more depression, and more autoimmune diseases.
5. ACEs are responsible for a large portion of: workplace absenteeism, higher costs in health care, emergency responses, mental health issues, child welfare cases, and criminal justice incidents.

STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN

This report highlights consensus findings from a diverse group of over 1,400 Arizonans including: family and child-service professionals, community and faith-based organization representatives, parents, grandparents, caregivers, family support advocates, incarcerated individuals, general citizens, and elected officials with an interest in this topic. Twenty-five Town Halls (17 Community Town Halls, seven Future Leaders Town Halls and one statewide Town Hall) were held across the state capturing urban, rural, tribal, and border-cities perspectives on how to support strong families and thriving children.

CHARACTERISTICS OF STRONG FAMILIES AND THRIVING CHILDREN

- Strong families with thriving children are like a tree: what matters most is the strength and health of the root system that provides the anchoring structure that nurtures and protects against outside forces that might otherwise blow it down.
- Strong families provide a sustaining environment where family members actively listen to each other and know their opinions will be valued.
- Children feel safe, have their basic needs met, and have access to at least one caring, capable adult.
- Parents are actively involved with their children's lives; providing opportunities for self-expression and setting aside time for family activities that strengthen bonds and instill values.
- Family members feel connected to their community and reach out for help when needed. They have access to support services and are resilient to stress and adversity.
- Parents and family caregivers demonstrate love and respect, model appropriate behaviors, articulate expectations and boundaries, and monitor their children's activities.
- Children feel free to make mistakes and learn from them, have a healthy level of independence, and receive the support they need to grow.
- Strong families share time, space, beliefs, and trust. They go beyond meeting basic needs to provide nurturing and teach resilience, leadership, and coping skills.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES TO SUCCEED

- To reflect the wide range of family structures in society, define family as a group of people who demonstrate a commitment to taking care of and supporting one another.
- Provide more programs that enable families to be financially secure, such as vocational training.
- Bridge silos and foster collaboration among agencies and organizations that support families.
- Provide policies and programs that support incarcerated individuals and their families.
- Help families move toward self-sufficiency. Focus on programs that offer a hand up rather than a hand out and have a "give back" component so that people "give a little and take a little."
- Increase engagement with support resources by utilizing participating families to publicize the success of the services and create a positive community ripple effect.
- Provide respite care for families who are struggling with significant stress.
- Use social media, mobile apps, teleservices, utility bills, and other communications tools to reach isolated families.



Top to bottom: Participants at the Casa Grande, Maryvale, and Mohave County Community Town Halls.



Community and inmate participants during group discussions at the ASPC - Perryville Community Town Hall.

ENABLING CHILDREN TO THRIVE

- Have age-appropriate educational programs that prepare children for a healthy and productive life including: self-care, healthy relationships, substance abuse avoidance, life skills, and civics.
- Require elected officials to visit schools to understand the impact of their decisions.
- Change our language to be strength-based. Think in terms of children of “potential” and “hope” rather than “at risk.”
- Train parents, teachers, family caregivers, and health care professionals in the prevention and identification of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).
- Reduce ACEs and increase protective factors by promoting collaboration among government agencies, corporations, nonprofits, and faith-based organizations to identify the services required, including: education, training, communications skills, peer-to-peer coaching, mentoring, counseling, and trauma-response systems.
- Strengthen community-based activities and organizations such as the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters.
- Encourage children to participate in athletics, arts, volunteer opportunities, and other extracurricular programs that build life skills.
- Provide parents access to tailored adult education to assist them with understanding child development and how to provide a stimulating and educational home environment.
- Leverage schools as resources by using school facilities to provide access to needed support and opportunities for community members to connect with each other.

INVESTING IN OPPORTUNITIES

- Consistently invest in children and families and recognize that strengthening families and children transcends partisanship.
- Incorporate a parenting class into the high school curriculum as well as a range of other classes including drug avoidance, violence prevention, and personal financial management.
- Fund parent education and provide complete and accessible resources.
- Provide additional training for law enforcement and first responders to deal with families in crisis, including mental health, violence, and drug issues.
- Implement programs in which police partner with trained volunteers or social service agencies when responding to crises.
- Leverage community groups to raise awareness about family needs and ACEs.
- Increase after-school programs that offer children additional educational support and provide working parents the security that their children are well cared for and safe.
- Support community gardens to make healthy food available and accessible at little or no cost.
- Address the needs of rural and tribal communities by ensuring that their voices are heard and by providing more resources and programs specific to their challenges.
- Look to local programs, such as Pima County’s MAMA, that could be expanded or scaled up, and consider adopting evidence-based national programs, such as the Nurse Family Partnership.



Top to Bottom: Student participants from Prescott, Phoenix, and Tucson gathered at Future Leaders Town Halls to discuss the challenges facing Arizona’s families.



Top: Friday breakfast panel presentation speakers on *Strong Families are Connected Families*: Rebecca Gau, Stand for Children; Quinton Moore, Greater Impact Church Phoenix; and, Jeff Taylor, Salvation Army of Phoenix. Moderator: Olivia Elder, FWD.us.

Bottom: Friday lunch panel presentation speakers on *Arizona Resources and Opportunities*: Jami Snyder, Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS); Mo Portley, Judicial Engagement Team, Casey Foundation; and Maria Cristina Fuentes, Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family. Moderator: Suzanne Pfister, Vitalyst Health Foundation.

Strong families teach resilience, leadership, and coping skills. A strong family creates positive expectations and goals.

- from the 112th Statewide Town Hall Report of Recommendations

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STATEWIDE TOWN HALL

- With input and support from stakeholders, establish and publicize a clearing house or hub for government and organizations offering services to families and children.
- Revise the formula and sources for funding schools to address inequities in the resources received by different schools and establish a per pupil budget that meets all students' needs.
- Increase overall education funding to: implement universally available pre-K and all-day kindergarten; reduce class size; increase pay for teachers and non-academic staff; expand school-based nursing, social work, and counseling services; and expand out-of-school quality programming that facilitates the screening, identification, and addressing of ACEs.
- Keep more families together by ending mandatory sentencing and giving judges more discretion.
- Fully implement the Family First Prevention Services Act.
- Remove systemic barriers to kinship caregivers being licensed as foster parents and increase the support they receive.
- Encourage employers to offer childcare benefits and paid parental leave.
- Increase the childcare subsidy and provide other funding to make affordable, quality childcare more available to families and to facilitate higher wages for early childhood educators.
- Reduce the case load for social service workers to effective levels and provide trauma training so they can better screen for and help prevent ACEs.
- Institute a program in which every home with a newborn child has the opportunity to receive a home visit to identify needs, offer parenting instruction, and provide mentorship.
- Ensure access to quality, basic physical and mental healthcare for all, including funding family-planning services and prenatal care.
- Increase funding for housing, education, and healthcare including mental health, substance abuse treatment, quality childcare, and out-of-school programs.
- Assess the impact of income caps for public benefits and encourage upward mobility by mitigating the impact for families when a marginal increase in income results in the loss of benefits such as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), public housing, childcare subsidy, etc. Include a gradual transition so the cliff becomes a slope.

COMMUNITY TOWN HALLS

- ASPC - Perryville
- First Things First Early Childhood Summit
- Prescott
- ADOC - Whetstone Unit
- Tucson - YWCA Conference Center
- Phoenix - UMOM
- Casa Grande
- Tucson - Affected Populations
- ADOC - Lewis Facility
- Sierra Vista
- Cave Creek
- Phoenix - Maryvale
- White Mountains - Pinetop
- Apache Junction
- Flagstaff
- Yuma - Southwest Arizona Town Hall
- Mohave County - Lake Havasu City

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS

1. Arizona Western College – Yuma Campus
2. Camelback High School
3. Mesa Community College
4. University of Arizona – Tucson Campus
5. Yavapai College – Prescott Campus
6. In collaboration with AzCASE - Casa Grande, Surprise and Flagstaff



Mitzi Epstein and inmate participants during group discussions at the Lewis Facility Community Town Hall.

STRONG FAMILIES THRIVING CHILDREN LINKS

Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium

www.azaces.org

Arizona Department of Child Safety

<https://dcs.az.gov>

Arizona Department of Economic Security

<https://des.az.gov>

Arizona Department of Education

www.azed.gov

Arizona Department of Health Services

www.azdhs.gov

Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS)

www.azahcccs.gov

Governor's Office of Youth, Faith and Family

<https://goyff.az.gov>

Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence

www.azafterschool.org

First Things First

www.firstthingsfirst.org

Strong Families AZ

www.strongfamiliesaz.com

Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics

www.childstats.gov

The Annie E. Casey Foundation

www.aecf.org

ACEs Too High

www.acestoohigh.com

Healthy Families America

www.healthyfamiliesamerica.org

Children's Trust Fund Alliance

www.ctfalliance.org

Center for the Study of Social Policy

www.cssp.org

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov

FWD.us

www.fwd.us

For additional links and resources, visit: http://aztownhall.org/112_Town_Hall



Participants review discussion questions at the Cave Creek Community Town Hall.



Denise Burrell, Ariel Fry, and Warren Bristol during group discussions in Tucson.



Kim Winzer and Peter Burns present amendments to the report of recommendations during the plenary session at the Statewide Town Hall.

Strengthening and supporting families is fundamental to strong societal systems and structures.

- from the 112th Statewide Town Hall Report of Recommendations



We welcome your involvement,
questions, and perspectives.

2400 W Dunlap Ave, Ste 200
Phoenix, AZ 85021

602-252-9600
www.aztownhall.org



Special Thanks

ASU Morrison Institute
for Public Policy
Arizona State University

*and Erica Quintana in particular for serving
as Editor of the Background Report*

Town Hall recommendations are a valuable resource for policymakers because they do not represent the agenda of a particular group or political perspective. Instead, Arizona Town Hall reports contain the informed consensus of Arizonans from different political parties, professions, socioeconomic status, and geographic areas of the state. A private, nonprofit civic organization, Arizona Town Hall serves as a catalyst for conversations and recommendations that create significant changes in Arizona's public policy. Countless local, state, and national leaders cite Arizona Town Hall as an important factor in educating people about complex issues and fostering the development of civic and community leaders.

SPONSORS OF THE 112TH STATEWIDE TOWN HALL

PREMIER PARTNER



CONSENSUS PARTNERS



CIVIC LEADER PARTNER

**The Agnese Nelms Haury
Charitable Trust**