The Challenge: Fifty-eight percent of Wisconsin adults have experienced one or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These include emotional, physical or sexual abuse, witnessing domestic violence, growing up in a household with substance abuse, mental illness, separated or divorced parents or having an incarcerated household member. The more cumulative ACEs individuals experience, the more likely they are to have a variety of health and social problems later in life. Currently, ACE data is being collected in Wisconsin, however, studies recommended additional data regarding health and social issues be collected to better inform prevention and intervention efforts.

Project Goal: The project aimed to gather data on childhood poverty and neglect, further analyze existing data, provide education about ACEs to policymakers, and test the feasibility of including ACE data in public health surveillance systems and the County Health Rankings.

Results: The project developed and tested childhood poverty, neglect and resiliency questions. These questions were included in the 2014 and 2015 survey samples. Additional analysis was conducted on previous data resulting in increased understanding of ACE impacts on health outcomes and disparities. Figure 1 highlights major disparities in health outcomes between those with no ACEs and those with four or more ACEs.

The project resulted in key individuals from state and local organizations trained as ACE Master Trainers who must conduct at least four ACE trainings throughout the state each year. Forty-three ACE Master Trainers have become active between 2014 and April 2016. In 2015 alone, they presented to approximately 3,300 individuals from settings that include Wisconsin governmental departments, local health departments, coalitions, tribes and other community organizations.

Additionally, recommendations based on the ACE data have been made to policymakers and a report has been disseminated at preventionboard.wi.gov.