MARC
MOBILIZING ACTION
FOR RESILIENT COMMUNITIES

Strengthening ACEs, Trauma, and Resilience Networks

OVERVIEW

A central focus of the Mobilizing Action for Resilient Communities (MARC) initiative was to help communities strengthen their existing ACEs, trauma, and resilience (ATR) networks. When MARC began, the networks differed from one another in many aspects, such as size, structure, and leadership. Accordingly, the specific ways in which MARC networks wished to change, as well as the approaches they used to achieve changes, also varied. In this brief, we highlight dimensions of network strengthening that MARC sites identified, and provide examples of steps taken to strengthen networks based on data collection with respondents who were part of MARC. As a central feature of selected MARC networks, we also describe the multisector nature of these networks and how this changed over time. At the start of the MARC initiative, 12 of 14 MARC sites identified engaging new sectors and increasing collaboration among all members as two key ways to strengthen their networks. Given the prominence of these two approaches, we describe them in greater detail below. Other potential mechanisms of network strengthening appear in Exhibit 1.

Engage New Sectors

Networks already included members representing between 11 and 20 different sectors when they initially became part of MARC. One year later, all sites had at least 14 sectors represented and the average number of sectors across the sites increased from 14 to 17. Sites most commonly expressed interest in engaging three sectors: business, law enforcement/criminal justice, and faith-based organizations. These three sectors have not often played a large role in ACEs, trauma, and resilience (ATR) networks, so communities had employed new strategies to engage them in the work.

- In Kansas City, the network developed a Business Workgroup that focused on educating and creating awareness among employers about the impact of trauma within the business community, identifying best practices for creating trauma-informed businesses.

- In the Columbia River Gorge (OR) region, the Chief of Police was a member of the core management team of the network, and able to leverage connections in law enforcement.

- In Alaska, the state-level network partnered with the Governor's Office to coordinate a series of forums located in several communities and provide trainings such as "ACEs in Alaska: What Can Faith Communities Do?" Through these efforts, three new members from faith-based organizations joined the network.

Exhibit 1. Examples of Potential Dimensions of Network Strengthening

Engaging new sectors

Increasing collaborative processes

Deepening the community base of membership

Promoting alignment among network participants

MARC networks increased the number of sectors on average by **14%**

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Increase Collaboration Among all Members

Networks described a strong desire to improve cross-sector collaboration and also collaboration among members more generally. Communities often identified increased collaboration as a key mechanism to being successful, such as one site that noted, "The stronger we are internally, the better able we are to affect the systems change we want with a strong and unified message." To increase collaboration in the Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative, the network conducted a detailed capacity assessment and then built an online platform to disseminate this information and facilitate collaboration across members. Anecdotal reports suggest that these steps were effective in creating a greater sense of awareness of activities across the city.

Another example of increased collaboration comes from the HEARTS network in Albany (NY), where the network structure intentionally changed from a small, close-knit group of social service organizations to a broad coalition that included diverse organizations and community members. This was accomplished by inviting all grassroots community leaders who attended ACE events to join HEARTS meetings, engaging community leaders to provide neighborhood ACE trainings and peer supports (policy entrepreneurs program), and actively reaching out across sectors to bring in new members from law enforcement, education, media, etc. With this purposeful shift toward a deeper community base, not only did the number of members increase but also the extent of collaboration among them.

Exhibit 2. Example of increased collaboration among members within a network over time

Time 1   Time 2
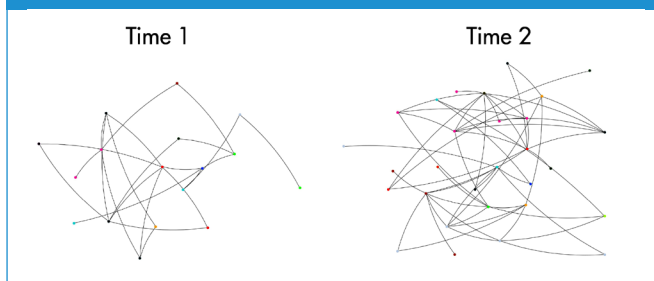
The examples above illustrate the work of selected sites in targeting specific sectors for inclusion. Data from the MARC Network Survey (see box), analyzed using Social Network Analysis (SNA), illustrates the growth of networks overall. Graphic representation of a typical increase in collaboration, as shown in Exhibit 2, is evidenced by the increase in number of lines between network members.

- The number of connections is a count of the number of unique network connections among the network of organizations for each site. Across the sites, 10 out of 12 MARC communities increased their total number of connections among members.
- Degree centrality is the average number of connections that each member of a network has. In three-quarters of the MARC sites, the degree centrality increased between the start and end of MARC.

> The MARC Network Survey is a web-based tool that was co-created with MARC sites. Sites sent the survey to their members at two time points over the timeframe of the initiative. A central component of the survey was a list of all organizations in the network. Each member rated the degree to which their agency currently interacts or collaborates with each other organization around the topic of ACEs and resilience. Response options included, "No interaction or collaboration," "Share information only," "Collaborate a little bit," "Collaborate some," and "Collaborate a lot."

SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

MARC networks both transformed and strengthened their structure and activities through a range of strategies. Many entered the initiative with ideas of ways they might wish to change. With the help of tools such as SNA, purposeful engagement of their communities, and careful planning, MARC networks were able to be intentional about who, why and how to engage new sectors and increase collaboration. Many of the changes enacted during the MARC initiative set in place new directions for the networks that continue to flourish and develop.

For more information about MARC, please visit **https://marc.healthfederation.org**

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