

# RESILIENCE ALEXANDRIA

*Building a more trauma-informed and resilient Alexandria*



## WELCOME PACKET AND ORIENTATION GUIDE

April 2021 Draft

## Table of Contents

Welcome New Member! .....	2
Trauma Defined .....	2
What does it mean to be trauma-informed?.....	2
What are Trauma-Informed Community Networks?.....	2
About Resilience Alexandria .....	3
Common Vision & Mission.....	3
Priorities.....	4
Committees.....	4
Cross Sector Collaboration.....	5
Backbone Organization and Strong Leadership.....	1
Equitable Membership and Authentic Engagement.....	1
Governance Structure.....	2
Established Measurement Practices.....	2
Continuous Communication .....	3
What can you do as a member? .....	3
Key Contacts.....	5



## Welcome New Member!

Welcome to Resilience Alexandria, Alexandria's Trauma-Informed Community Network! This guide was developed to ensure that all new network members have same basic network history and context. We look forward to working with you!

## Trauma Defined

### 3 E's: Event, Experience, Effects

Trauma refers to experiences that cause intense physical and psychological stress reactions. It can refer to a single event, multiple events, or a set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically and emotionally harmful or threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being (SAMHSA, 2014).

## What does it mean to be trauma-informed?

### 4 R's: Realize, Recognize, Respond, And Resist Re-traumatizing

A program, organization, or system that is trauma-informed:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization

**A trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization (SAMHSA, 2014).**

## What are Trauma-Informed Community Networks?



*Virginia TICNs take a group photo at the Childhood Trauma and Resilience Summit in Richmond, April 2019*

Throughout Virginia, there are more than 26 communities coming together across disciplines around trauma-informed care. Most often in Virginia, these groups form as *trauma-informed community networks (TICNs)*. Every TICN looks different because they are built by the local community, however, in each of these communities, these networks share common characteristics. They:

- Build a stronger, more resilient trauma-informed community,

- Increase awareness of trauma and adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and identify areas that the group can collectively build upon,
- Develop a shared language about trauma and resilience,
- Help organizations to become trauma informed, conduct trainings, support, and implement new practices in schools, courts, and community services,
- Create a mechanism for collaboration, and the sharing of information and resources,
- and much more.

These TICNs help to connect practice across disciplines and help to identify gaps and how policies can be implemented. Virginia's community networks play a key role in advancing trauma-informed policy and promoting a statewide policy agenda. For more information about Virginia's TICNs and the Campaign for a Trauma-Informed Virginia, visit the Voices for Virginia's Children website: <https://vakids.org>



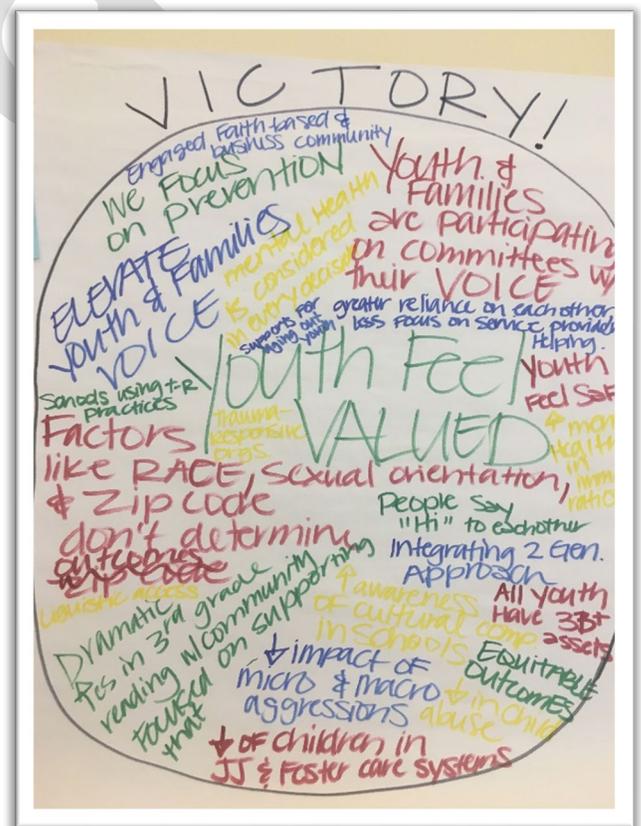
### About Resilience Alexandria

Alexandria's Trauma Informed Community Network (TICN) is located in Alexandria, Virginia. Established in July 2019, Alexandria's TICN aims to build a more equitable, safe, trauma-informed and resilient Alexandria by informing, supporting and elevating our community. Hence its name, *Resilience Alexandria: Inform. Support. Elevate.* (RAISE)

### Common Vision & Mission

In July 2019, RAISE held its first meeting and members were asked to 1. Identify sources of trauma in Alexandria, 2. Vote on a name for the network, and 3. Articulate its purpose. We used this information to develop our shared vision for change, as well as our membership.

Within a few short months of its origin, RAISE members developed their mission statement and subcommittees to ensure a unified approach to building healthier and more resilient communities. **The RAISE mission is to build a more trauma-informed and resilient Alexandria by informing, supporting and elevating our community.**



## Priorities

RAISE members were asked to use their lived experience and expertise to identify sources of trauma that are specific to Alexandria. Based on those sources, four following priorities drive RAISE's mission:

1. *Inform* Alexandria's community and various sectors about RAISE and its mission to build a more trauma-informed and resilient Alexandria;
2. *Support* community members and professionals by delivering trainings focused on ACEs, trauma, and resilience, and
3. *Support* organizations becoming trauma-informed by providing them with technical assistance in transforming their spaces, policies, and procedures; and finally
4. *Elevate* our community's needs and voice through advocacy at the local and state level.

## Committees

These priorities and RAISE's current capacity resulted in the following committees which guide RAISE's strategic direction:

- **Member Engagement and Wellness Committee:** Support existing efforts that aim to promote community wellness and resiliency among RAISE members and the greater community
- **Justice Advocacy Committee:** Support community members and professionals by delivering trainings focused on ACEs, trauma, and resilience, and elevates our community's voices by advocating for justice and advancing policies that dismantle systems that perpetuate racial trauma and inequity.
- **Changing Environments and Cultures Committee:** Help organizations create a trauma-informed culture by providing them with technical assistance in transforming their spaces, policies, and procedures.

Each of these subcommittees have developed their own action plans that will guide future work and evaluate progress



*First official RAISE Meeting, Lloyd House, July 2019*

## Cross Sector Collaboration

Since May 2019 when RAISE launched with an ACE Interface presentation to its members, RAISE has engaged partners from various systems to leverage diverse perspectives and to develop new and innovative ways to serve our community.

To date, RAISE nearly 500 members from over 60 governmental, nonprofit, and community-based initiatives, including:

- Adult Services,
- Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy,
- Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) Parent Resource Center,
- ACPS Dept. of Student Services, Alternative Programs and Equity,
- ALIVE!,
- Alexandria Health Department,
- Alexandria Police Department,
- Alexandria's Court Services,
- Arlington Public Schools,
- Child and Family Behavioral Health Services,
- Child Welfare and Protective Services,
- Children and Youth Master Plan,
- Children, Youth and Families Collaborative Commission,
- College and Graduate Students and Interns,
- Commission for Women,
- Commonwealth's Attorney,
- Community Services Board,
- Cora Kelly PTA,
- Domestic Violence Program and Sexual Assault Center,
- Doorways for Women & Families,
- Early childhood education and care programs,
- Emergency Services,
- Fairfax Public Schools.
- Faith-based organizations,
- Family Engagement Services,
- Fatherhood Programs,
- Formed Families Forward,
- Foster Care Services,
- Haven Shelter & Services,
- Higher Horizons Day Care Center,
- Housing and Homelessness Services,
- LGBTQ Task Force,
- Military communities,
- Mindful Junkie
- Northern Virginia Family Services,
- Northern Virginia Health Foundation,



*First official RAISE Meeting, Lloyd House, July 2019*

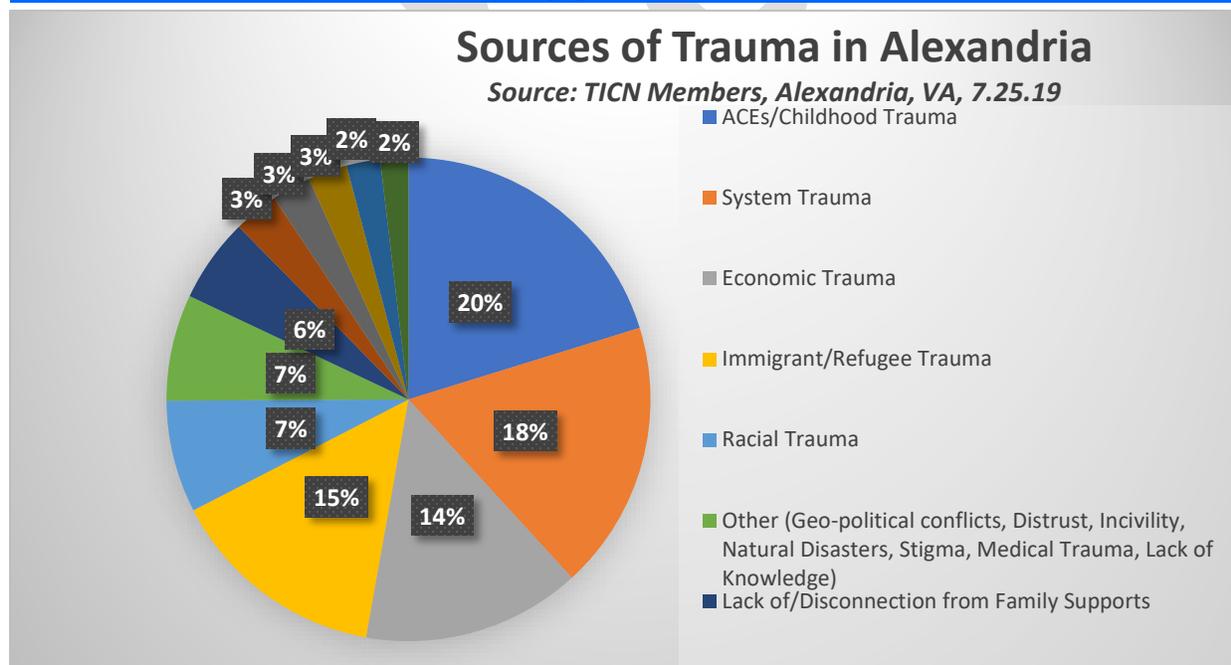
- Office of Community Services,
- Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria,
- Private Mental Health Providers,
- Richmond Government,
- Stop Child Abuse Now,
- Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria,
- United Way,
- Voices for Virginia’s Children,
- Workforce Training Programs,
- Youth Serving Organizations,
- And Residents

### Backbone Organization and Strong Leadership

The Center for Children and Families (CCF) within the City of Alexandria’s Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) serves as the TICN’s direct backbone organization. CCF is responsible for oversight of the City’s Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault programs including the City’s DV shelter. CCF is a recognized leader and resource in the City when it comes to the complexity of family, domestic and intimate partner violence.

CCF convenes RAISE partners on a monthly basis, fostering connections, and driving change in order to push and sustain large-scale collaborative efforts. Within DCHS, CCF provides the infrastructure through dedicated staff and ongoing engagement of partners to ensure that everyone remains connected to an overarching purpose, efforts are maximized, work and accomplishments are shared, and duplication of effort is avoided.

### Equitable Membership and Authentic Engagement



In every step of the process, partners with lived experience in primary and secondary trauma have been engaged as equal partners while designing RAISE’s structure and common vision.

When RAISE was established, 60 members representing 21 different organizations and programs across the city were asked to use their lived or professional experience and expertise to consider the various sources of trauma that impact Alexandrians.

From that activity, members determined that 74% of trauma in Alexandria comes from either childhood trauma (20%), economic trauma (14%), immigrant/refugee trauma (15%), racial trauma (7%) and the trauma experienced while interacting within a system - either as an individual seeking services or as a staff member experiencing secondary trauma (18%).

Members also shared trauma-informed efforts already occurring across the city, voted on a name for the TICN, identified key elements to include in RAISE - such as trainings and the sharing of resources, updates of local trauma-informed efforts, and networking opportunities - developed the mission, goals, and subcommittees, and have been “trauma champions” in their communities and workplaces.

RAISE members agree that membership is instrumental to being a strong network and is something that everyone can help build and maintain to honor the diversity in the room. Members are encouraged to extend the RAISE invitation to their interns. For members who can't physically attend meetings, they have the option of contributing their ideas through surveys and by inviting RAISE Coordinators to meet them where they are, such as community meetings and events, to engage community members about ACEs, trauma, and resilience. Members have frequently expressed feeling energized, empowered as service providers, and more connected to Alexandria's network of resources after our monthly meetings.



*RAISE Members representing Alexandria at Childhood Trauma & Resilience Summit in Richmond, April 2019*

## Governance Structure

RAISE's governance structure supports cross-agency and cross-sector decision-making to ensure forward progress.

**Statewide TICN:** RAISE is dedicated to collaborating and coordinating with statewide trauma-informed activities, and does so by attending statewide TICN and policy partners meetings, and participating in statewide efforts, like sending constituents to the Childhood Trauma and Resilience Summit, advocacy day, and submitting stories of our efforts to the Statewide TICN Showcase. A member of Voices for Virginia's Children attends RAISE meetings to provide statewide policy updates and opportunities for advocacy.

**RAISE Co-Coordinators:** The DCHS Director of the Center for Children and Families and the Coordinator of the City's Children and Youth Master Plan provide STABLE and CONSISTENT backbone support and coordination to RAISE. They use their positions to leverage opportunities to connect and align the trauma-informed efforts of the many agencies their work intersects with daily.

**Subcommittees:** Each of the RAISE subcommittees are populated with staff from across agencies and sectors. Every month, time on the RAISE agenda is dedicated to subcommittees meeting with their members to discuss activities, progress, and decisions that are specific to their committee's responsibilities and work plans. Actions and decisions are then reported out to the full group at the end of the meeting. Chairs of Subcommittees are responsible for providing committee leadership, communicating with RAISE Co-Coordinators, and managing committee tasks outside of RAISE meetings.

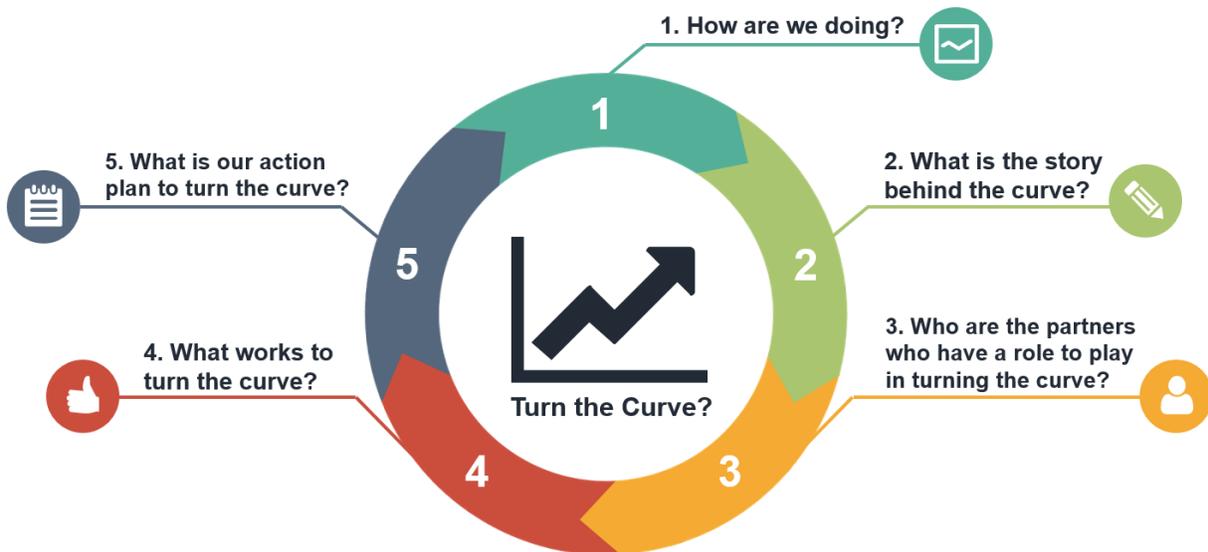
**Members:** RAISE members help to build and maintain the membership base to honor the diversity of RAISE.



## Established Measurement Practices

Accountability is paramount to RAISE. We believe in data-driven decision-making that allows us to efficiently determine if we are “moving the needle” when it comes to reducing violence and traumatic or adverse experiences. We also are committed to using data to determine when we need to correct our course or make other alterations in our direction that better serve our workforce and community.

Plans are for RAISE to adopt Results-Based Accountability (RBA) as its guiding data-driven, decision-making structure and its “turn the curve” thinking as follows:



### Continuous Communication

RAISE includes a Member Engagement and Wellness Committee dedicated to meaningfully engaging Alexandrians in our mission to build a more trauma-informed and resilient community. This Committee developed a Member Engagement Plan to ensure our network’s engagement with our partners and broader community is consistent, frequent, and authentic and allows opportunities for feedback and questions about our process.

RAISE maintains a webpage on the City’s website, providing more information about Alexandria’s TICN and how to get involved. All meeting materials, notes, agendas, announcements, advocacy opportunities and updates, etc. are communicated monthly to members through an eNewsletter.

### Meetings

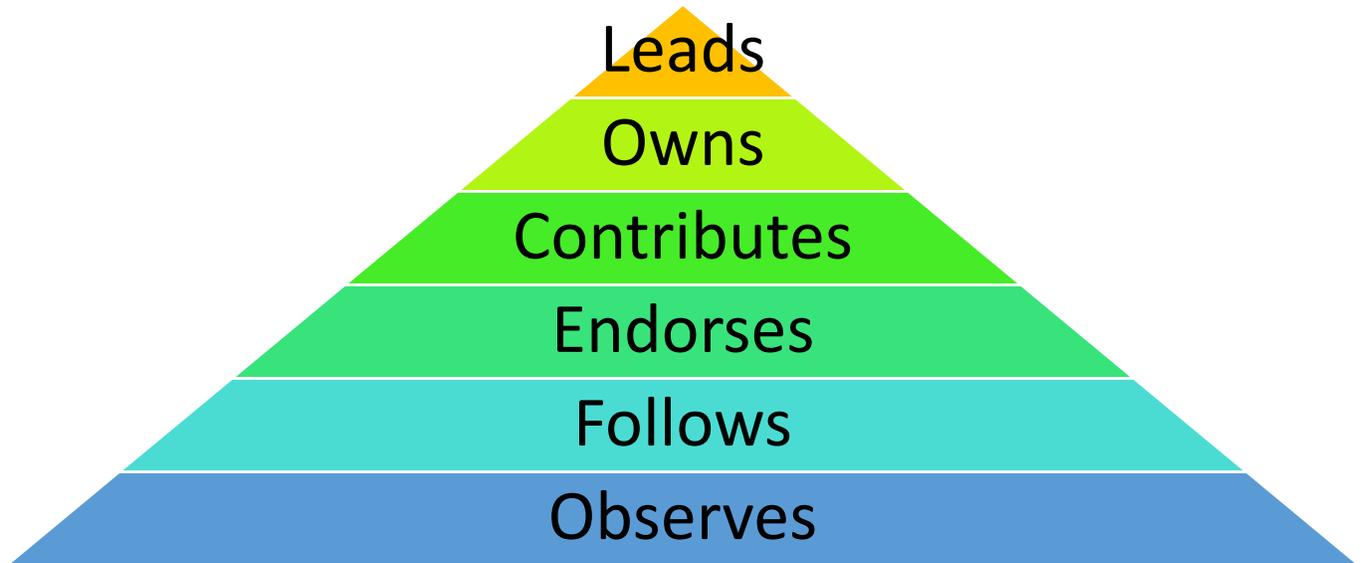
RAISE meets virtually every quarter from 10:00-12:00.

For an up to date list of upcoming meeting dates, visit [alexandriava.gov/child-and-family-services/raise](https://alexandriava.gov/child-and-family-services/raise)

### What can you do as a member?

RAISE believes that cultivating authentic community engagement is a non-linear process and not a one-time event or conversation. Members of the community can participate in RAISE at many different levels, and the pyramid on the next page describes each of those levels. While some people want to jump right in and start contributing their ideas at meetings, organizing events, and delivering trainings, not everyone who engages with RAISE will choose to move up the pyramid. Some people will find the spot that is comfortable for them and stay there. That is

fine - the pyramid is not meant to imply that one level of engagement is better than another. To be a strong community network, we need individuals at all levels of the pyramid.



Here are a few examples of the types of activities in which an individual may participate at each level of the RAISE pyramid.

- **Level 1: Observes**
  - Visits RAISE Webpages, watches videos
- **Level 2: Follows**
  - Joins RAISE Mailing List to stay up to date on trainings, events, and other information
- **Level 3: Endorses**
  - Helps disseminate information from RAISE to their networks
  - Supports policy changes by signing letters and petitions and responding to calls to legislative action
- **Level 4: Contributes**
  - Attends network meetings, trainings, and events and promotes them
  - Contributes ideas, weighs in on decisions,
  - Shares what is going on in their agency related to trauma-informed care implementation
  - Shares what is learned at RAISE meetings with their teams
  - Engages with other network members, and learn about upcoming events
- **Level 5: Owns**
  - Helps coordinate special projects or actions in the RAISE Transformation Plan
  - Helps organize events and hosts trainings and film screenings
  - Develops a strategy to communicate within their own agency or organization about trauma-informed initiatives in the city
  - Advocates for trauma-informed policies at the agency, county, state, and federal government levels
  - Advocates for trauma-informed policies, practices, and procedures within their own personal and professional spaces
  - Actively participates on a RAISE Committee

- Tables for RAISE at community events
- **Level 6: Leads**
  - Chairs one of RAISE’s Subcommittees
  - Joins the pool of RAISE trainers and delivers educational trainings in the community to raise awareness of the importance of ACEs and ways to build community resilience
  - Assists organizations create more trauma informed spaces, policies, and practices
  - Represents RAISE at partner meetings to engage community members

## Key Contacts

**Email:** [RAISE@AlexandriaVA.Gov](mailto:RAISE@AlexandriaVA.Gov)

### RAISE Co-Coordinators:

#### **Chelsea Eickert**

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Department of Community and Human Services  
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### Advocacy and Policy:

**Voices for Virginia’s Children**  
<https://vakids.org/>

#### **Kristin Lennox**

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Voices for Virginia’s Children  
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#### **Emily Griffey**

Policy Director  
Voices for Virginia’s Children  
[Emily@vakids.org](mailto:Emily@vakids.org)

### Committee Chairs:

**Member Engagement and Wellness Committee:**  
Noraine Buttar [noraine.buttar@alexandriava.gov](mailto:noraine.buttar@alexandriava.gov)

### Training Committee:

Gina White [gina@rollwhite.com](mailto:gina@rollwhite.com)

### Changing Environments:

Chelsea Eickert [Chelsea.Eickert@alexandriava.gov](mailto:Chelsea.Eickert@alexandriava.gov)  
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