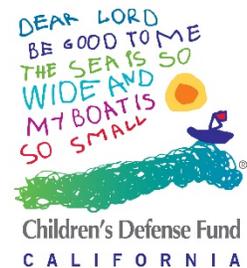


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## **New Report Highlights Need to Address Child Trauma**

*Policy forum uplifts innovative community programs and policies that are helping children and youth heal*

Richmond, CA – Children’s Defense Fund-California (CDF-CA) released a report emphasizing the need for community-based services to address and heal trauma experienced by children and youth. The report, *Helping Children Heal: Promising Community Programs and Policy Recommendations*, highlights exemplary programs in Oakland and Richmond that are healing children and youth and building resilience through trauma-informed mental health treatment paired with exposure to the arts.

“We cannot afford to ignore the devastating impact that trauma and chronic exposure to violence have on our children and youth. New neuroscience research shows what those in our communities have long known: exposure to traumatic events in childhood harms children’s developing brains so profoundly that the effects show up decades later in the form of poor health and mental health and the perpetuation of violence and poverty,” said Alex Johnson, Executive Director of Children’s Defense Fund-California. “By intervening early to heal childhood trauma, we can help raise resilient children who can grow up to live healthy productive lives.”

Leaders from the featured programs and more than 50 state and national experts in trauma-informed mental health and education participated in a policy forum at RYSE Youth Center on September 18. The forum, cosponsored by CDF-CA, RYSE Youth Center, and ACE Connection Network, highlighted policy changes to create opportunities for trauma-informed services for children and youth. At the policy forum, **Assemblymember Tony Thurmond (D-Richmond)** and **Assemblymember Rob Bonta (D-Oakland)** called on California to create schools, community healing centers and programs that are fully responsive to the reality of trauma in student’s lives.

Building on recent neuroscience showing the remarkable ability for children’s brains to heal from trauma, CDF-CA’s report highlights local community programs that are building resiliency in children and youth by giving children love, positive role models, and opportunities for artistic expression and physical activity. The report features four successful programs: RYSE Youth Center in Richmond, and Destiny Arts Center, Niroga Institute, and Beats Rhymes and Life in Oakland. The report calls for a coalition

of advocates, community leaders, policymakers, families, and health providers to come together to collectively address childhood trauma.

“In our schools, we can begin by finding alternatives to suspensions and expulsions. When we address the source of a child’s behavior, we are in a better place to keep them in school and help them achieve academic success,” Alex Johnson added. “In health care, we need primary care providers and mental health professionals fully equipped to address the emotional burdens children and youth carry. In juvenile justice, we need programs that acknowledge the role of trauma in getting youth into the system and we need to ensure our systems are not re-traumatizing youth through punitive practices like solitary confinement.”

The report, *Helping Children Heal: Promising Community Programs and Policy Recommendations*, is available at [www.cdfca.org](http://www.cdfca.org).

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*The **Children’s Defense Fund-California** (CDF-CA) is the state office of the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF), a national child advocacy organization founded by Marian Wright Edelman that has worked relentlessly for over 40 years to ensure a level playing field for all children. CDF-CA was established in 1998 to meet the needs of underserved children in the state of California. CDF-CA has offices in Los Angeles, Oakland, Sacramento and Long Beach. CDF-CA champions policies and programs that lift children out of poverty, ensure all children have access to health coverage and care and a quality education, and invest in our justice-involved youth. [www.cdfca.org](http://www.cdfca.org)*