

Caucus “Ask” Toolkit: Asking Your Congressperson to Join the Bipartisan House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus

Thank you for your commitment to creating and sustaining trauma-informed change! Your support is essential to the success of the National Trauma Campaign (Campaign), and we are excited to equip you with this toolkit.

CTIPP envisions this Campaign building on the extensive action that is already occurring in communities and states throughout the country. A chorus of voices sounding from a nationwide network of constituent community leaders, advocates, and practitioners – you and people like you – will demonstrate the groundswell of support for preventing and addressing childhood trauma and building resilience.

The Campaign’s first call to action is to grow the membership of the bipartisan House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus (Caucus) by making the “ask” of every member of the U.S. House of Representatives to join. In a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to their fellow House members, Caucus co-chairmen, Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI), indicated that “the Caucus’ goal is to identify opportunities to embed trauma-informed care efforts within federal legislation and operations.” We believe this is a fantastic starting point to mobilize legislative efforts toward a more trauma-informed society.

This toolkit is designed to make it easy for you to participate in this call to action (click the section title or page number to jump to that spot in the toolkit):

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Visit CTIPP.org/NationalTraumaCampaign for regular updates and for additional toolkits to aid you as we make progress together.

Questions? Email TraumaCampaign@gmail.com. We are here to set you up for success!

Thank you again for all that you do in support of trauma-informed policies and practices!

With gratitude,
Your National Campaign Core Team

The Trauma-Informed Care Caucus

“What is a Caucus?”



Caucuses are groups of Members of Congress who organize around their interest in a specific issue area. For example, there is a Foster Care Caucus and a Public Lands Caucus.

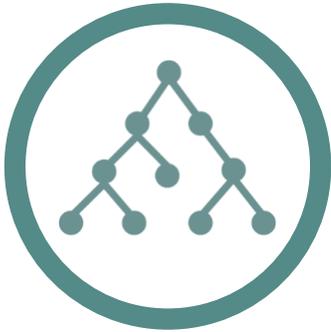
In this case, the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus is a group of U.S. Representatives who have joined together to pursue a shared topical interest for the purposes of embedding trauma-informed care efforts within federal legislation and operations. While trauma-informed care is already recognized and utilized by several federal agencies, including Health and Human Services (HHS), Department of Justice (DOJ), and Department of Labor (DOL), we want to ensure that the House of Representatives understands its importance and the value of incorporating trauma-informed practices and principles into all of the relevant federal programs.

A caucus will provide information to its members, hold briefings and arrange for speakers to share evidence, research, and information concerning preventing and addressing childhood trauma and building resilience, and provide analysis of trauma-related bills that have been introduced.

Members of the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus

Current Members of the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus (as of February 2021):

- **Danny Davis** (IL-7)
- **Mike Gallagher** (WI-8)
- **Mary Gay Scanlon** (PA-05)
- **Bryan Steil** (WI-1)
- **David Trone** (MD-6)



As you can see, there is quite a bit of work to do to get the other 431 members of the U.S. House of Representatives to join the bi-partisan House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus!

The Campaign goal is to get **75% of the House** to join the Caucus. Representatives Danny Davis and Mike Gallagher sent a [Dear Colleague letter](#) to their fellow House members, asking them to join the Caucus in October 2019. Your involvement as a constituent is so important to building on this effort and increasing Caucus membership!

The Caucus “Ask”

Caucus “Ask” Instructions

You are represented in Congress by two Senators and one Representative.

It is advisable that you do some quick research to find out who they are, learn a little about their political history, and determine what their priorities have been while in Congress. Each Member has their own website which will contain a biography, details about their work in Congress, as well as their District Office locations and phone numbers.



Step 1: Find Your Representative

To find your Representative, as well as links to their contact information and website, visit [this link](https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative) and enter your zip code (you may need the additional four digits of your zip code):

<https://www.house.gov/representatives/find-your-representative>



Step 2: Email Your Representative

After learning who your Representative is and how to contact them, use the [email template from p. 7](#) to reach out to their office. From the “Find Your Representative” webpage, **click the envelope icon** underneath your Representative’s photo and copy and paste the email template message into their form. (NOTE: You only need to reach out to your U.S. Representative, as this is the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus. The U.S. Senate does not have a caucus set up to learn about trauma and ACEs.)

If you are game to do more, please continue with Steps 3-5.

Step 3: Call Your Representative’s Front Desk (optional, but very useful)

It may increase the effectiveness of your outreach to call your Member’s office and use the following script to ask the receptionist for the name and direct email address for the staff person who works on trauma, health, and/or wellbeing issues for the office.



My name is [INSERT YOUR NAME], and I live in Representative [INSERT LAST NAME OF HOUSE MEMBER]’s district. I’d like to be in touch with the Representative about joining the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus. What is the name and email address of the staff member who would handle this request for the [congresswoman/congressman]?

Most likely, the person you talk with will give you the name and email and the call can end there. If they offer you the opportunity to speak with the staff person, or if you'd like to make that request, you can use these talking points (for additional talking points, [see p. 10](#)):

Hello, my name is [INSERT FIRST AND LAST NAME] and I am a constituent of Representative [INSERT LAST NAME].

I understand that Representatives Danny Davis and Mike Gallagher co-chair the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus and I'd like to ask Representative [INSERT LAST NAME] to become a member of the Caucus. Is that something you can ask the Representative to do?

Be aware that, once you propose this, the staff person may have some questions of their own. Answer the questions, if you are able, but it is also perfectly fine for you to say, "I'm happy to take your questions and get back with you." You don't have to have all the answers. Typically, congressional staff are very kind and supportive to constituents and they want your outreach to them to be comfortable and helpful.

Step 4: Follow Up to Your "Ask"

It is important to close the loop, and to build an on-going relationship with your congressional office, to follow up.



If you get a, "Yes, I will join the Trauma-Informed Care Caucus"

If your outreach results in the Member expressing interest in joining the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus, ask them to contact Jill Hunter-Williams in Congressman Davis' office, if they are a Democrat, or Maggie Woodin in Congressman Gallagher's office, if they are a Republican.



If you get a, "No, I will not join the Trauma-Informed Care Caucus"

If the Member says they will not join the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus, don't be discouraged! The National Campaign will equip you to be in regular contact with their local District and Washington DC offices to further educate both offices on all aspects of preventing and addressing childhood trauma. You will have opened a line of communication with the office and that is considered a "win" for the Campaign and the cause.



If you get a, "Maybe, I need more information about the Trauma-Informed Care Caucus"

1. you can direct them to Jill Hunter-Williams in Congressman Davis' office (Democrat) or Maggie Woodin in Congressman Gallagher's office (Republican) to learn about the Caucus;
2. you can use the opportunity to provide information on the science and research on childhood trauma and let them know how important preventing and addressing trauma is in their district by sharing about trauma initiatives within your local community and/or state; and/or
3. you can [contact the National Campaign Core Team](#) who can meet with the staff member in person in the Washington DC office.

Whether you receive a yes, no, or maybe...

No matter what response you receive, visit CTIPP.org/NationalTraumaCampaign and choose one (or all three) of the infographics to send in a follow-up reply. They can be found [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#). It might be helpful to use this email template:



Dear [INSERT NAME OF OFFICE STAFF],
Thank you so much for handling my request that Representative [LAST NAME] join the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus. I have [attached/provided links to] (an) infographic(s) that provide(s) additional information on childhood trauma and [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) (ACEs).

[IF THE ANSWER WAS “YES” – I appreciate that Representative [INSERT LAST NAME] plans to join the Caucus. I look forward to serving as a resource. Please let me know how I can be helpful.]

[IF THE ANSWER WAS “NO” – I understand that this is not a Caucus that Representative [INSERT LAST NAME] plans to join right now. I look forward to continuing to be in touch to share information about the science and research on the importance of preventing and addressing childhood trauma and building resilience.]

[IF THE ANSWER WAS “MAYBE” – I understand that Representative [INSERT LAST NAME] needs more information before deciding whether or not to join the Caucus. I hope the information in the infographics will be helpful. Please let me know how I can be of further support to [her/his] decision making process. It is very important to me that [she/he] gives this opportunity serious consideration.]

Step 5: Report your progress to the Campaign

Let the National Campaign Core Team know how things went using our easy-to-use [Liaison Progress Report spreadsheet](#), especially if your Representative responded with an answer of any kind and/or if you identified the staffer who works on the issues related to the Campaign’s focus. For additional guidance on how to complete this report, please do not hesitate to reach out to us at TraumaCampaign@gmail.com.

The Caucus “Ask” Email Template

You can use this email template to reach your Representative and ask them to join the bipartisan House Trauma-Informed Caucus. If you would like to go one step further in support of the campaign, [please click here](#) for sample social media posts that you can copy, paste, and share to help grow the movement online!

Subject Line: Please Join the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus

Email Body:

Dear Representative [INSERT LAST NAME]:

[We are/I am] writing to urge you to join the House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus. [We are/I am] following up, as your constituent(s), to the [Dear Colleague letter](#) that Representatives Danny Davis and Mike Gallagher, Caucus co-chairs, circulated on October 7, 2019. The [INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION/COALITION], located in [INSERT LOCALITY OR STATE], provides [BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, OR YOUR ORGANIZATION/COALITION PROVIDES/DOES (focus on the aspect of it that applies to preventing/addressing childhood trauma.) – OR – if you are writing as an individual, you can just use the first two sentences of this paragraph.]

The World Health Organization recently issued [a report](#) finding that the health care costs alone caused by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in the United States exceeds \$700 billion a year. Since [Congress funds around 30% of all health care services](#) in this country, ACEs are costing the federal budget over \$200 billion a year in health care costs alone.

Neuroscientists and social scientists have shown how childhood trauma, often caused by such experiences as physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, living in a household with spouse abuse, a parent incarcerated, and others (often referred to as [Adverse Childhood Experiences](#) or ACEs) is the underlying cause of so many of the critical health and social problems Congress is trying to address, including substance abuse, suicide, incarceration, obesity, diabetes, cancer, and many others.

Fortunately, there is a growing body of evidence that it is possible to prevent childhood trauma or mediate its effects on those who already suffered trauma. Congress has the ability to draw on this evidence to enact legislation that will significantly reduce the multitude of health and social problems caused by ACEs, problems it has been wrestling with for years with limited success. For example, the [CDC recently reported](#) that eliminating ACEs can prevent almost 2 million heart attacks a year. Preventing ACEs will also reduce the several hundred billion dollars a year that are spent addressing the problems caused by ACEs.

The House Trauma-Informed Care Caucus will offer opportunities for your office to connect to the latest information on effective ways to build wellbeing by preventing or responding to trauma. As your constituent(s), [we are/I am] working locally to make progress on addressing childhood trauma and will be working to support the Caucus. To join the Caucus, you can contact Jill Hunter-Williams (Jill.Hunter-Williams@mail.house.gov; 5-5006) in Congressman Davis’ office or Maggie Woodin (Maggie.Woodin@mail.house.gov; 5-5665) in Congressman Gallagher’s office.

Thank you for giving your full consideration to joining the House Trauma-Informed Caucus. Please let [us/me] know if there is further information [we/I] can provide.

Sincerely,

[FOR A COALITION: INSERT NAME OF COALITION, FOLLOWED BY A POINT OF CONTACT AND THE CONTACT INFORMATION]

[FOR AN ORGANIZATION: INSERT THE REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION AND THE CONTACT INFORMATION]

[IF YOU ARE A REACHING OUT AS AN INDIVIDUAL: INSERT YOUR PREFERRED METHOD OF CONTACT – EMAIL AND/OR PHONE.]

Congressional Outreach 101

Meeting with Your Member of Congress or Staff

Congressional visits are an opportunity for you and your organization to meet directly with Representatives, Senators, or their professional staff to directly promote awareness, influence public policy, and draw attention to the importance of a cause or issue facing your community. As a member of the community, you are a constituent, a voter, and you have a story to share with your elected officials. Members of Congress have an office in Washington, DC and they have an office in your community or “District.”

Your voice and the voice of your organization carry a great deal of weight with elected officials. Congresspeople want to hear about the issues facing their constituency, so it is important to make clear what is being done in the community and, even more importantly, illuminate what they and their staff can do to address the issue at the national level.

These meetings are an opportunity to educate and influence both Members and professional staff on the important issues facing you and those in your community. After all, Members of Congress are key policymakers and their decisions affect the everyday lives of people all over the country.



Congressional staff are involved in virtually every element of a working Congress, and advocating issues before them builds a local connection that you and your organization can nurture as the process moves forward. Securing interest and support from the staffer, whether they are in the DC or District office, is key to ensuring that the Member is aware of the issue facing their community.

As a local outreach volunteer, the relationship the staff is the one you want to build. A meeting with your Congressperson may follow but connecting with the staff in DC and/or the District is vital to the goals of the coalition in building broad local support for trauma-informed policy.

Primer on Working with Congressional Staffers

Each Member of Congress has a staff that supports them in their representation in Congress, which includes various duties and functions in Washington, DC, and constituency offices in the District. The average Congressional office contains a staff of about 14-18 people while a Senate office averages twice that number.

Washington D.C. offices are focused on federal policy and legislative initiatives and usually include a Chief of Staff, Legislative Director (LD), Press Secretary, Executive Assistant/Scheduler, Legislative Assistants (LAs), and Legislative Correspondents/Staff Assistants (LCs/SAs).

District offices are based in your community and are more focused on community happenings. The District-based staff act as liaisons to state and local agencies for the Member and their constituency. District offices tend to include a District Director, Field Representatives, Case Workers (for constituent services), and a District Scheduler.

Tips and Talking Points for Congressional Meetings

Keys to Successful Congressional Meetings

- **Arrive on time.** Be punctual - arriving a few minutes early is best. Let the office staff know ahead of time how many of you will be attending so they can accommodate your group. It is best to keep your group somewhat small as many Congressional offices tend to have very little space.



The office may ask if you are from the District. If not, be prepared to speak on behalf of an organization in the district that is a part of the coalition.

- **Remain flexible.** Members and staff are constantly pulled in multiple directions and their schedules frequently shift with little notice. This is not personal to you or our mission.
- **Be polite.** Create a polite, respectful environment for discussion by keeping your personal political views out of the conversation and focusing your time on advocating for specific issues.
- **Know the issue.** Present the issue and goals of the organization/group in a clear and concise manner, using personal experiences and anecdotes throughout.
- **Prepare a request.** Know what your specific request for the office will be, and make your request of the office clear and concise at the beginning of the meeting.
- **Keep it brief.** Meetings on Capitol Hill last 15-20 minutes and can get cut short due to votes, hearings, phone calls, etc. District offices tend to have more flexibility and time to meet. Get your most important messages out early.
- **Meet them where they are.** Open the meeting by politely asking the staffer how familiar he or she is about ACEs. If they are familiar with ACEs, you can save time by not providing all of the background information you might need to provide to someone unfamiliar with the issues around trauma. Encouragingly, more and more Congressional staff are becoming knowledgeable on this issue—a stark contrast from 3-4 years ago when virtually nobody was aware.
- **Speak only to what you know.** If you are asked a question that you do not know the answer to, simply say you will get back to them with the answer. When you do answer them at a later date, you will ideally answer with written material that supports your answer. Please contact the National Campaign Core Team at TraumaCampaign@gmail.com for assistance with following up.
- **Arrive with materials.** Present and leave behind in-depth material and contact information, but keep the paper you provide the staffer during the meeting to a minimum (such as a 1-2 pager, a trifold, etc.). The Campaign infographics can be used. Know that they will likely be reading it while you are talking. Do not be concerned about this.
- **Be gracious.** Be sure to thank the Member/Staff for taking the meeting.

- **Keep the momentum going!** Be sure to follow up with the staff member within a day or two via email, thanking them for the meeting and summarizing any follow-up information you promised. Staying in touch and building relationships is the key to success when working with Congress.



If you are trying to meet in person with your Congressperson in your District, make sure to request a meeting while Congress is in recess, otherwise the Member will likely be working in the DC office. You can find out when Congress is in session and when they are in recess by visiting the [House](#) and [Senate](#) calendars.

Talking Points

Who We Are

Explain who you are and your connection to/interest in the issue. You may be representing yourself or a coalition. Either way, you can share that you are a part of this national Campaign that is focused on strengthening federal, state, and local actions to prevent and address childhood trauma and build resilience. If you live or work in the Congressperson's District, make that clear at the beginning that you are a constituent.

The Crisis

Adverse Childhood Experiences, or "ACEs," are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (ages 0-17 years).

Examples include:

- experiencing violence or abuse
- witnessing violence in the home or community
- having a family member attempt or die by suicide

Also included are aspects of a child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with the presence of:

- substance use disorders
- mental health challenges
- instability due to parental separation or to household members being in jail or prison

The Impacts

Traumatic experiences dramatically affect millions of Americans across the United States. Research has shown that toxic stress and trauma experienced during a child's neurodevelopment are associated with mental health and substance use issues as well as many chronic physical health conditions. These experiences can hinder a student's ability to learn, prevent a veteran from reintegrating into society, or impede an adult from meaningfully participating in the workforce.

The Campaign's Goals

- Addressing and preventing ACEs by creating a resilient, trauma-informed society where all individuals, families, and communities have the opportunity and support needed to thrive.
- Raising awareness about the prevalence and immediate and lifelong impact of childhood trauma on individuals and using that knowledge to reexamine how we interact with and support each other throughout society.
- Communicating the costs of trauma to federal, state and local governments.
- Engaging policy makers to create and pass policies that prevent and address childhood trauma, and its effects, and build resilience.

The Benefits

- Addressing and preventing ACEs could save the federal government [\\$217 billion per year in healthcare costs](#) while simultaneously improving health and wellbeing for all of us.
- A trauma-informed approach is designed to identify and address the root causes of some of our most pressing public health issues including addiction, obesity, depression, chronic mental health issues, and more.
- After becoming trauma-informed, school teachers, correctional officers, childcare workers, and social workers, among others, are better able to serve their communities by working with people who have experienced trauma from a perspective of understanding.

Related Activity in the Congressperson's District

Provide information on trauma-informed activities, programs, trainings, etc. going on in the Congressperson's District. Tying the discussion back to relevant activity in the District usually gets the staff person's attention, and identifying actionable items for your Congressperson to follow up on will illuminate the ways in which constituents would directly benefit from the office's activity.

Our Request Today

We request that your office join the **House Trauma Informed-Care Caucus** co-Chaired by Representatives Danny Davis (D-IL) and Mike Gallagher (R-WI).



To join the Caucus please contact:

Congressman Davis' office at 5-5006 (Democrat)

Congressman Gallagher's office at 5-5665 (Republican)

For additional tools, learning materials, and advocacy ideas, please visit our website at CTIPP.org/NationalTraumaCampaign. Please also feel free to reach out to the National Campaign Core Team at TraumaCampaign@gmail.com for additional guidance and support. Thank you so much once again—the massive paradigm shift we envision occurring over the next few years would not be possible without you!

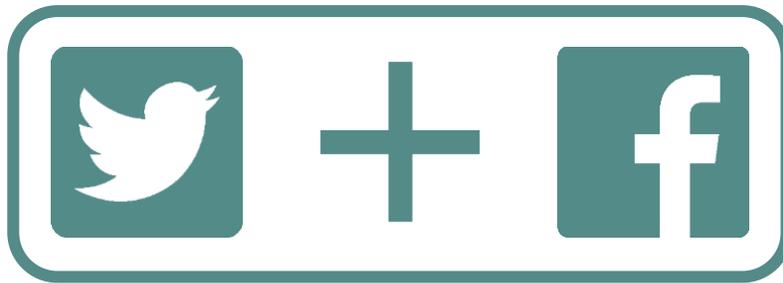
Sample Social Media Posts

Sample Social Media Posts

Join in on social media to spread the word about the Campaign!

Please use the hashtag **#TransformChildhoodTrauma** along with the Campaign infographics and sample messages listed and linked below on Twitter, Facebook, and other social media platforms on which you are active.

You may use these as text only or you can pair the text with the infographics that are linked after each sample tweet. Feel free to tailor the message to the work that you do.



Congress needs to: Realize the widespread impact of trauma. Recognize signs and symptoms. Respond by integrating science and knowledge into policies. Join efforts to educate and engage Congress. Sign up today! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Trauma-Informed-Systems.jpg>)

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[Your organization name/handle] is joining the national campaign to urge Congress to prevent and address childhood trauma and build resilience. Everyone is welcome! Sign up today and take action with us! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-and-Health-Risks.jpg>)

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Policies that prevent and address childhood trauma and build resilience lead to better mental and physical health outcomes. We need Congress to help people heal. Sign up for a new national campaign to urge federal action! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-and-Health-Risks.jpg>)

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Policies that prevent/address childhood trauma lead to better mental & physical health outcomes. We need Congress to help people heal. Apply to be a Local Liaison to your congressional office for the National Trauma Campaign. <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-and-Health-Risks.jpg>)



@WHO found ACEs cost US three-quarters of a trillion healthcare dollars/year. Addressing and preventing ACEs could save the federal govt \$217 billion in healthcare/year. Join the national campaign to urge action! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/The-Cost-of-ACEs.jpg>)



Did you know that more foster children have PTSD than war veterans? Trauma-informed policies improve experiences for children & families. Join a new national campaign to urge federal action! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Trauma-Informed-PoliciesPractices-for-Children.jpg>)



@CDCgov found that ACEs increase the likelihood of mental and health conditions that are preventable. Join [your organization name/handle] in a new national campaign to urge Congress to prevent and address trauma. Sign up today! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-and-Health-Risks.jpg>)



Preventing ACEs means a safer, healthier country. Join [your organization name/handle] and many other partners nationwide to urge Congress to prevent and address childhood trauma and build resilience. Sign up today! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-at-a-Glance.jpg>)



Preventing ACEs means a safer, healthier country. A new congressional education and engagement campaign needs Local Liaisons to congressional offices. Apply today! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-at-a-Glance.jpg>)



Adverse Childhood Experiences & Adverse Community Environments impact people & communities. Urge Congress to prevent & address childhood trauma for individuals, families and communities. Join a new national campaign! <http://bit.ly/2OA05dP> #TransformChildhoodTrauma

(optional infographic: <http://www.ctipp.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/ACEs-at-a-Glance.jpg>)