

## A Classic Kids' TV Series Brings its Lessons



**Sesame Street** is one of the most recognizable and beloved programs on television. For nearly 50 years, the series has provided many valuable educational and cultural lessons using live action, sketch comedy and well-known characters like Big Bird, Elmo and Oscar the Grouch. Sesame Workshop's *Sesame Street in Communities* (SSIC) initiative takes those lessons a step further by going directly into viewers' cities and neighborhoods. The bilingual, multimedia program aims to help young children and their families work through a broad range of issues in ways that will engage their minds and foster further development. For that reason, a new partnership between NACHC and SSIC is a natural fit.

The two organizations have joined forces to provide useful resources designed to help families face both everyday and unique challenges. NACHC will integrate SSIC's research-based resources to reach and engage parents, caregivers, and health care providers via more than 1,400 community health centers nationwide. SSIC offers more than 800 free activities on over two dozen topics, including asthma, autism, nutrition, early math skills, literacy and resilience in the face of life's challenges.

"When you think about Sesame Street, you are instantly brought back to your childhood or your own children's and grandchildren's experiences growing up," says Jason Patnosh, Associate Vice President for Partnership and Resource Development at NACHC. "To see those characters utilized across topics that are encouraging healthy and safe lives provides health center providers and community members a wealth of resources to ensure young people are getting a healthy start to life."

Under the two-year partnership, NACHC will designate the Saturday during National Health Center Week towards children and young people, naming SSIC as a partner. In addition, NACHC will share SSIC's resources — including printed materials, promotional products and other items — as well as information about the partnership at its conferences. NACHC will also establish a Health Center/SSIC Advisory workgroup to discuss the resources that will be shared and promoted by health centers.

The initial areas of focus for the partnership will be childhood trauma, emergency preparedness and response, and health-related topics such as dental care and healthy eating. While children today face a number of challenges, these three broad issues were considered the most pressing. Additional topic areas will be considered once the Health

# to Health Center Communities



Center/SSIC Advisory workgroup is convened.

An analysis of data from the 2016 National Survey of Children's Health shows that nearly 50 percent of children under age 18 have experienced at least one of nine Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs), ranging from divorce to violence to poverty and to the imprisonment of a parent.<sup>1</sup> More than 20 percent have experienced at least two ACEs. According to the analysis, children exposed to multiple ACEs are at greater risk for issues impacting their health, learning and development, and that can have cumulative effects as they grow older.

In the SSIC resources, the Sesame Street characters model a number of coping strategies. These include Big Bird learning that his nest is a "safe space" that he can use to feel better, the Count teaching Cookie Monster a breathing strategy to relax, Elmo building a blanket fort

to feel secure, and Sophia helping Abby Cadabby build her self-confidence.

Some of the health-related issues addressed in SSIC's activities include daily routines such as brushing teeth, washing hands and exercising. In one video, the Sesame Street character Grover goes to the doctor for a checkup and discusses what kids can expect at their own checkups. Another activity features a printable healthy teeth coloring book, while another printable includes a maze with crunchy fruits and vegetables.

SSIC also offers free professional development training. For example, the organization offers a training video on how to help children grieve, an interactive tutorial on building resilience, and a webinar on ways to improve communication between caregivers and parents, along with strategies for enhancing interactions between children and adults.

NACHC and its *Sesame Street in Communities* initiative partner hope their collaboration will broaden the capacity of providers, parents and caregivers to help children flourish. "Every kid wishes to visit Sesame Street one day," says NACHC's Patnosh. "If we can bring a little piece of Sesame Street to every child served by a community health center, we begin to fulfill those wishes and start them off on a healthy life." ♦

*For more information on the NACHC and Sesame Street in Communities partnership, contact: [jpatnosh@nachc.org](mailto:jpatnosh@nachc.org).*

<sup>1</sup> The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative, 2017. A national and across-state profile on Adverse Childhood Experiences among U.S. children and possibilities to heal and thrive. [http://www.cahmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/aces\\_brief\\_final.pdf](http://www.cahmi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/aces_brief_final.pdf)