

## About SYNC

**Strengthening Systems for North Carolina Children (SYNC)** helps North Carolina communities that are disproportionately affected by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) identify the factors causing ACEs. Community teams also learn how to identify ways to **strengthen systems and build community resilience to prevent and mitigate ACEs.**

SYNC is designed for **community teams of 10 to 25 people** representing a variety of sectors and perspectives in their community. Community teams learn how to apply simple **systems thinking approaches** to create a collective understanding of how to disrupt systems and structures in their communities that are driving ACEs.

*We will be disseminating quarterly newsletters to provide project updates and share highlights and success stories from participating communities.*

Community teams receive 18 months of support from systems thinking professionals from (1) the North Carolina Division of Public Health's Injury and Violence Prevention Branch (IVPB), (2) University of North Carolina Injury Prevention Research Center (UNC IPRC), and (3) Rural Opportunity Institute. The project is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

## What's Happened So Far?

Each community team receives six months of training and application and a year of technical assistance while the community implements their systems-level plan. Two North Carolina communities have participated in SYNC. Our first community, Surry County, began in 2022 and recently concluded their second year. Our second community, Franklin County, began in early 2023 and recently started their technical assistance portion. During the training portion, both community teams:

- created a system thinking tool, called a causal loop diagram (CLD), to depict the factors influencing ACEs in their county,
- used the CLD to identify and prioritize strategies to prevent and mitigate ACEs, and
- developed an action plan to implement the prioritized strategies

## What's Coming Up?

The next round of applications will open on Monday, January 22nd, 2024! **This will be final round of SYNC.** The selected community team will participate in the SYNC training in fall 2024 and receive one year of ongoing technical assistance after completing the training. Dates for the fall 2024 training sessions will be announced when the call for applications is released.

## SYNC Community Team Highlight

### What are the benefits of participating in SYNC?

- Learn systems thinking techniques for cross-system, coordinated, long-term ACEs prevention work.
- Receive direct training and technical assistance from subject matter experts.
- Network and build relationships with organizations and members in your community who are doing ACEs prevention work.

Our first community team was from Surry County. The team was interested in integrating an ACEs focus into their needs assessment, action planning, and implementation of family-centered approaches to treat substance use disorder (SUD). Since SUD can stem from ACEs, the team was interested in developing a community-based, family-oriented continuum of care that intervenes on the cycles of ACEs and SUD. Surry County also expressed interest in identifying protective factors in the community that could be leveraged for prevention. Through the SYNC training, Surry County developed a causal loop diagram (CLD) that depicted the connections of county-level risk and protective factors that influence ACEs in their area.

To learn more about Surry County's experience with SYNC, read the testimony of the Surry County community team leader [here](#).

## SYNC Planning Team Highlight: Ingrid Bou-Saada



Ingrid Bou-Saada, MA, MPH  
NC Division of Public Health  
Injury and Violence Prevention  
Branch

I work at the NC Division of Public Health in the IVPB where I manage the Core State Injury Prevention Program (Core SIPP), which is funded by the CDC. IVPB contracts with the UNC IPRC to manage the SYNC program. I administer the contract and serve on the SYNC planning team, where I assist as a workshop presenter and provide technical assistance to the communities participating in SYNC. I became interested in systems thinking as an approach to make effective, long-lasting changes to the conditions in which people live and their health outcomes. My career experience and passion for preventing intimate and sexual violence and child maltreatment led to an interest in preventing broader ACEs with the hope of improving lives.

Be on the lookout for the third and final SYNC application launch! The application will open on January 22nd, 2024.

Questions? For more information, [visit SYNC's webpage](#) or contact Meghan Chua at [chuam@live.unc.edu](mailto:chuam@live.unc.edu)



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