



RIVERSIDE COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
**NEWS RELEASE**  
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## **DA HESTRIN RECOGNIZES THREE PEOPLE WITH COMMUNITY HERO AWARDS**

**RIVERSIDE** – Each year, the Riverside County District Attorney's Office recognizes heroes in our community. On May 17, 2022, DA Michael Hestrin presented the Community Hero Award to three Riverside County educators for their work bringing the Aware to Care Exchange (ACE) to Riverside County.

The honorees are:

**Dr. Chuck Fischer**, recently retired Executive Director of Alternative Education at the Riverside County Office of Education (RCOE)

**Brian Sousa**, Administrator of Student Data and Achievement at RCOE

**Dr. Karen Kirschinger**, Director of Student, Community, and Personnel Support at the San Jacinto Unified School District

ACE is a notification system that supports children exposed to "Adverse Childhood Experiences." Adverse Childhood Experiences are potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood such as experienced violence, abuse, or neglect. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Adverse Childhood Experiences can increase the risks of injury, child health problems, involvement in sex trafficking, and chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease, and suicide.

In 2021, the District Attorney's Crime Prevention Unit partnered with the Riverside County Office of Education, first responders, and school districts countywide to create and launch the ACE system which allows first responders who encounter trauma-affected children to send a notification to the child's school district. The notifications do not provide confidential details about the incidents or identify the referring agencies. However, ACE alerts a child's school site that the student experienced a traumatic event and may require support from educators and counselors. School staff can then observe the child's academic performance and behavior at school and provide trauma-sensitive services and interventions if they believe it will be helpful and appropriate.

In 2021, ACE received more than 170 notifications of children experiencing trauma in our communities. Those notifications spanned 80 different schools across 20 Riverside County school districts.

In presenting the 2021 Community Hero Awards, District Attorney Michael Hestrin said of Dr. Fischer: "ACE would not exist in Riverside County without the amazing work of Dr. Chuck Fischer and the Riverside County Office of Education. Dr. Fischer worked behind the scenes to have RCOE host all the technological pieces necessary to make ACE a reality."

Of Mr. Sousa, he said: "Mr. Sousa oversaw and implemented every technical aspect of ACE's creation. He created the technical network between the first responding agencies and school sites/districts, enabling the ACE notifications to be made. To say this has been a monumental task is a monumental understatement."

And about Dr. Kirschinger, DA Hestrin said: "Dr. Kirschinger and her team were operating a similar program for the San Jacinto Unified School District prior to ACE's creation. When we approached her about ACE, Dr. Kirschinger could not have been more helpful. Using her expertise, she provided us with every piece of information we needed

to bring ACE countywide, and she provided training to educators across the county so they understood how the program would work at school site and school district levels.”

The DA’s Office believes that ACE is a critically important tool in assisting children exposed to Adverse Childhood Experiences. In 2020, the system did not exist in Riverside County. The partnership between the District Attorney’s Office, RCOE, first responders, and our school districts made it a reality. In 2022, every law enforcement and fire agency in Riverside County has opted into ACE, which is now operating countywide.

Please watch the following videos to learn more:

"What is the ACE program?": <https://youtu.be/-D38-rb3qCk>

"Community Hero Award": <https://youtu.be/RgydPfWERdk>

To learn more about ACE, you can contact the DA’s Crime Prevention Unit at [cpu@rivcoda.org](mailto:cpu@rivcoda.org)

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