

What Are PCEs?

Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

PCEs describe a set of interpersonal relationships between family, friends, in school, and in community that fosters a child's capacity to thrive.

Examples of PCEs Include When Children

- » Feel able to share their feelings with their family.
- » See their family as a source of support.
- » Feel like their family looks out for each other and stands by each other during difficult times.



- » Enjoy participating in community traditions (e.g. spiritual events, clubs, and festivals).
- » Feel a sense of belonging in school.



- » Feel supported by friends.
- » Have at least 2 non-parent adults who take genuine interest in them.
- » Feel safe and protected by an adult in their home.
- » Have someone to take them to a doctor if needed.

Why do PCEs matter?

Studies have shown that children who have more supportive experiences with family, friends, and people in their school and community may be less likely to have psychological or relationship troubles in adulthood.

- » PCEs predict better adult functioning (i.e. civic involvement, responsibility, interpersonal connection, physical exercise), even after accounting for substance use.ⁱ
- » Family strengths protect adolescents from adverse health and risky behavior, including sexual debut, emotional distress, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, violence, and substance abuse.ⁱⁱ
- » Secure attachment in the first years of life; exposure to spoken language; and safe, stable, and nurturing relationships are integral to successful child development.ⁱⁱⁱ
- » Exposure to specific PCEs (i.e. support, loyalty, protection, responsiveness to health needs) results in a 30%-40% decrease in adolescent pregnancy.ⁱⁱⁱ
- » PCE score is significantly associated with (1) adult depression and/or poor mental health and (2) social and emotional support in adulthood.ⁱⁱⁱ

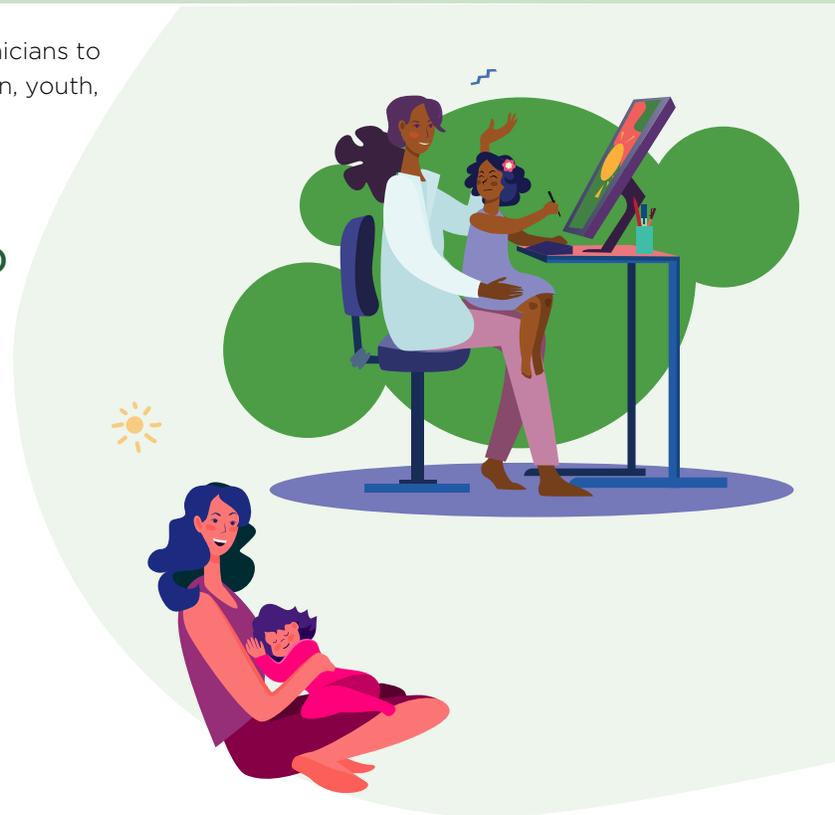


Recommendations for Clinicians

The recommendations below provide a consistent way for clinicians to develop a strategy and take effective steps to support children, youth, and their families.

Encourage Public Health Efforts and Policies Aimed at Boosting PCEs in Conjunction with Reducing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) by Advocating for the Following:

- » Improve awareness of ACEs and PCEs at policy and practice levels.
- » Promote PCEs and support building resiliency in children and families to prevent and minimize the negative impact of ACEs.
- » Work with community organizations to provide greater assistance to children and families to improve access to care and promote community integrated care.
- » Expand high quality early learning and childcare.
- » Invest in support programs and resources to help parents and families cope better, keep children safe, and reduce the number of children needing care (e.g. government assistance programs).
- » Increase school funding to tackle the attainment gap.ⁱ



Integrate PCEs into Care when Assessing, Planning, and Initiating Actions

- » Improve parents and caregivers' understanding of child development and how early childhood adversity can impact physiology, relationships, and learning ability.
- » Develop a framework to consistently structure and analyze information to recognize the interests, abilities, and challenges of a child or young adult to determine what support is needed.
- » Define needs and threats as two sides of the same coin, encouraging the participation of children, young people, and their families in gathering information and making decisions that are essential to assessment, preparation, and intervention.
- » Provide a shared understanding of a child or young person's needs by identifying concerns that may need to be addressed.^{iv}



Importance of Positive Childhood Experiences

PCEs such as supportive family interactions, caring relationships with peers, and community ties, are associated with decreased risks of adult depression and poor mental health, and increased chances of improved healthy and wellbeing.ⁱ

When children are exposed to adverse and stressful situations, they may experience long-term challenges in their ability to think, communicate, and learn.



i. *Positive Childhood Experiences and Positive Adult Functioning: Prosocial Continuity and the Role of Adolescent Substance Use* (February 11, 2011 - <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1054139X10007652>)
ii. *Protecting Adolescents From Harm Findings From the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health* (September 10, 1997 - <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jama/article-abstract/418137>)
iii. *Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample* (September 9, 2019 - <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/2749336>)
iv. *Getting It Right For Every Child: Understand Well Being: Consider the Quality of Children and Young People's Lives* (March 23, 2016 - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/getting-right-child-understanding-wellbeing-leaflet/pages/1/>)