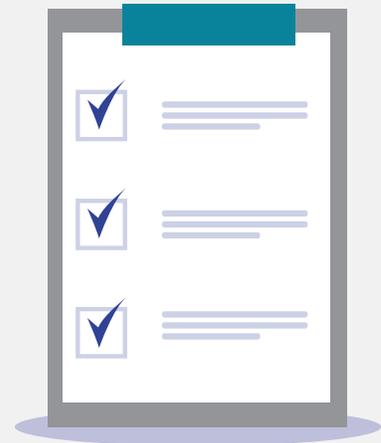


What Are **ACEs**?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (**ACEs**)

ACEs are disruptions to the promotion of safe, stable, and nurturing family relationships and are characterized by stressful or traumatic events that occur during an individual's first 18 years of life.ⁱ

Research consistently indicates that limiting ACEs is central to healthy child development and wellness across an individual's lifespan.



What is an ACE score?

An ACE score is a tally of different types of abuse, neglect, and other hallmarks of a rough childhood.

A majority of Americans have at least one or more ACEsⁱⁱ

Every 2 out of 3 children

experience 1 or more traumatic events before the age of 16.ⁱⁱⁱ



Girls are more likely to

experience traumatic events than boys, especially in the African American population.^{iv}



Socio-economically disadvantaged populations, including those with income insecure backgrounds and/or a lack of education

are likely to have



which often lead to

Negative Health Outcomes



ACEs

CATEGORIES



ABUSE

Emotional Abuse

The child is frequently sworn at, insulted, put down, humiliated, or made fearful of being physically hurt.

Physical Abuse

An adult living in the household frequently pushes, grabs, slaps, or throws things at the child, or hits them to the point of injury.

Sexual Abuse

A person at least 5 years older than the child touches or fondles the child in a sexual manner, or attempts to have, or has, sexual intercourse with the child.

HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES

Domestic Violence

A family member is being pushed, grabbed, slapped, kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or threatened with a gun or knife.

Substance Use

A household member misuses alcohol or uses street drugs.

Mental Illness

A household member is depressed, mentally ill, or has attempted suicide.

Parental Separation or Divorce

The child has lost a biological parent through divorce, abandonment, or another reason.

Incarceration

A household member has gone to prison.

NEGLECT

Emotional Neglect

The child's feelings are ignored, or their family does not look out for each other, make them feel close, or supported.

Physical Neglect

The child does not have enough to eat, has to wear dirty clothes, and has no one to take them to the doctor if needed. An adult is too under the influence to care for the child.



Association Between ACEs & Health Outcomes

Undermining

a child's sense of safety and stability and exacerbating levels of toxic stress can harm aspects of the nervous, endocrine, and immune systems and lead to disrupted neurodevelopment across the lifespan.^{vi}

Susceptibility to Mental Health Challenges

Childhood trauma and household challenges correlate with lifetime depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress

disorder. Approximately 2/3 of suicide attempts are attributable to exposure to forms of trauma encompassed in ACEs.^{vii}

Disruption and Absence of Intervention

lead to social, emotional, and cognitive impairment, and the adoption of health risk behaviors (e.g. smoking, drug use, disordered eating, unsafe sexual behaviors – often adopted as coping mechanisms).^{vi}

Likelihood for Diminished life Opportunities

Socio-economic indicators (e.g. educational attainment, employment, and income) are often interconnected and serve as determinants to subsequent life opportunities, which impact a person's health and quality of life.^{iv}

CLINICAL APPROACH



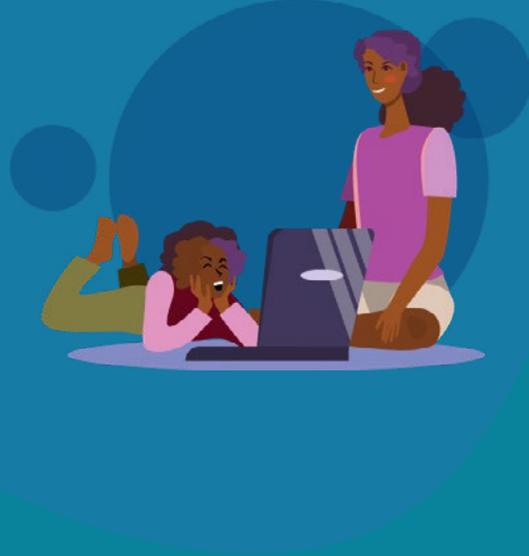
Incorporating ACEs into risk assessments and treatment plans can catalyze access to intervention services and wraparound treatment for children and families.

Regularly screening for early adversities allows clinicians to work with children and families to address any immediate threats, and provide referrals to appropriate services.^v



Determining the most effective treatment modality will undoubtedly be a personalized and varied process for each child but ultimately should provide individuals with the tools to lead healthy, productive, and fulfilling lives.

Utilizing trauma-informed approaches to acknowledge the impact of trauma, recognize its symptoms, respond to its effects, and work towards preventing further traumatization.



ACEs are a prominent public health issue due to their short- and long-term ramifications on health, wellbeing, and life potential, all amounting to estimated hundreds of billions of dollars in economic and social costs each year.

References

- i. Bethell CD, Carle A, Hudziak J, et al. Methods to Assess Adverse Childhood Experiences of Children and Families: Toward Approaches to Promote Child Well-being in Policy and Practice. *Acad Pediatr*. 2017;17(7S):S51-S69. doi:10.1016/j.acap.2017.04.161
- ii. <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2015/03/02/387007941/take-the-ace-quiz-and-learn-what-it-does-and-doesnt-mean>
- iii. Copeland, W., Keeler, G., Angold, A., & Costello, E. (2007). Traumatic events and posttraumatic stress in childhood. *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 64(5), 577-584.
- iv. <https://reader.elsevier.com/reader/sd/>
- v. https://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/ACESBriefUpdatedFinal_ChildTrends_February2018.pdf
- vi. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html>
- vii. Dube SR, Anda RF, Felitti VJ, Chapman DP, Williamson DF, Giles WH. Childhood Abuse, Household Dysfunction, and the Risk of Attempted Suicide Throughout the Life Span: Findings From the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study. *JAMA*. 2001;286(24):3089-3096. doi:10.1001/jama.286.24.3089

