

WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?

- Adverse childhood experiences, or ACEs, are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood (0-17 years). For example:
 - experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect
 - witnessing violence in the home or community
 - having a family member attempt or die by suicide
- Also included are aspects of the child's environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and bonding, such as growing up in a household with:
 - substance use problems
 - mental health problems
 - instability due to parental separation or household members being in jail or prison
- Please note the examples above are not a complete list of adverse experiences. Many other traumatic experiences could impact health and wellbeing.

WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES?

- ACEs can have lasting, negative effects on health, well-being, as well as life opportunities such as education and job potential. These experiences can increase the risks of injury, sexually transmitted infections, maternal and child health problems (including teen pregnancy, pregnancy complications, and fetal death), involvement in sex trafficking, and a wide range of chronic diseases and leading causes of death such as cancer, diabetes, heart disease, and suicide.
- ACEs and associated social determinants of health, such as living in under-resourced or racially segregated neighborhoods, frequently moving, and experiencing food insecurity, can cause toxic stress (extended or prolonged stress). Toxic stress from ACEs can negatively affect children's brain development, immune systems, and stress-response systems. These changes can affect children's attention, decision-making, and learning.
- Children growing up with toxic stress may have difficulty forming healthy and stable relationships. They may also have unstable work histories as adults and struggle with finances, jobs, and depression throughout life. These effects can also be passed on to their own children. Some children may face further exposure to toxic stress from historical and ongoing traumas due to systemic racism or the impacts of poverty resulting from limited educational and economic opportunities.

Types of ACEs



ABUSE

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual



NEGLECT

- Emotional
- Physical



HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES*

- Substance misuse
- Mental illness
- Suicidal thoughts and behavior
- Divorce or separation
- Incarceration
- Intimate partner violence or domestic violence

Other Adversity



- Bullying
- Community violence
- Natural disasters
- Refugee or wartime experiences
- Witnessing or experiencing acts of terrorism

* The child lives with a parent, caregiver, or other adult who experiences one or more of these challenges.