

# ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

looking at how ACEs affect our lives & society and implications for prevention

## What are ACEs?

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)** is the term given to describe types of abuse, neglect, and household challenges that may have been experienced by individuals under the age of 18. These experiences have been linked to reduced health and well-being later in life.

## ACEs can be prevented

**Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments** may help people reach their full health and life potential by preventing early adverse experiences before they occur and protecting against poor outcomes for children who have already experienced adversity.

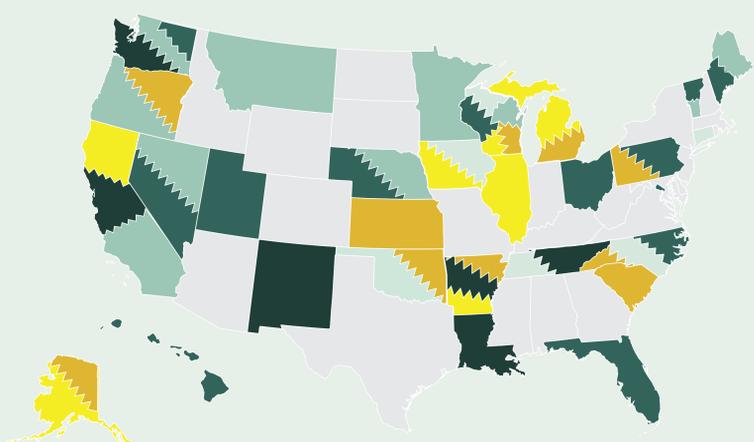
## Who Participated?

### Landmark CDC-Kaiser ACE Study

Between 1995 and 1997, over 17,000 Health Maintenance Organization members from San Diego, California receiving physical exams completed confidential surveys regarding their childhood experiences and current health status and behaviors. Almost two-thirds of adults surveyed reported at least one ACE – and the majority of respondents who reported at least one ACE reported more than one.

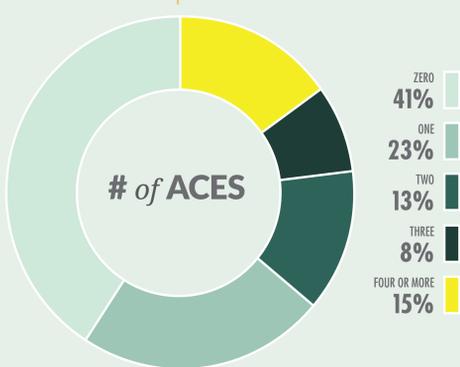
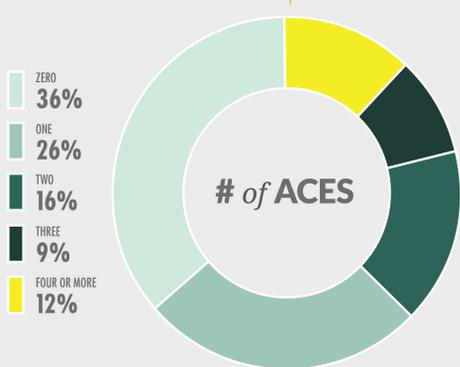
### Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS)

The BRFSS is an annual, state-based, random-digit-dial telephone survey that collects data from noninstitutionalized U.S. adults regarding health conditions and risk factors. In 2010, a review of BRFSS data included 53,998 respondents from DC and ten states (HI, ME, NE, NV, OH, PA, UT, VT, WA, and WI) that included the optional ACE module on their state survey.



Although the original study ended in 1997, many states are collecting information about ACEs in their population through the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS).

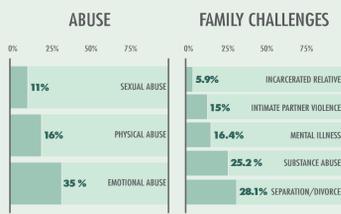
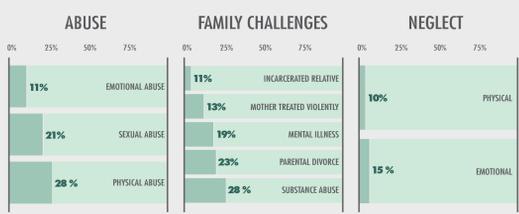
## How Common are ACEs?



## Types of ACEs

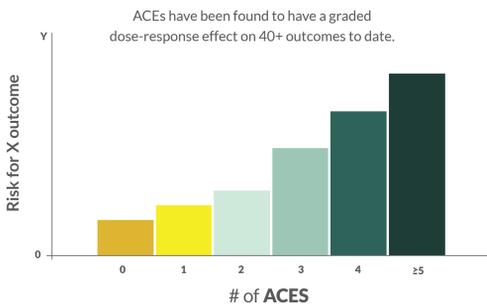
The ACE study looked at three categories of adverse childhood experiences: **abuse**, which included emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; **neglect**, including both physical and emotional neglect; and **household challenges**, which included growing up in a household where there was substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of a mother or stepmother, parental separation/divorce or had a member of the household go to prison. Respondents were given an **ACE score** between 0 and 10 based on how many of these 10 types of adverse experience to which they reported being exposed.

The official CDC optional ACE module to BRFSS includes the same questions, except for the questions pertaining to neglect.



## ACEs can have lasting effects on...

- Health** (obesity, diabetes, depression, suicide attempts, STDs, heart disease, cancer, stroke, COPD, broken bones)
- Behaviors** (smoking, alcoholism, drug use, missed work)
- Life Potential** (graduation rates, academic achievement, lost time from work)

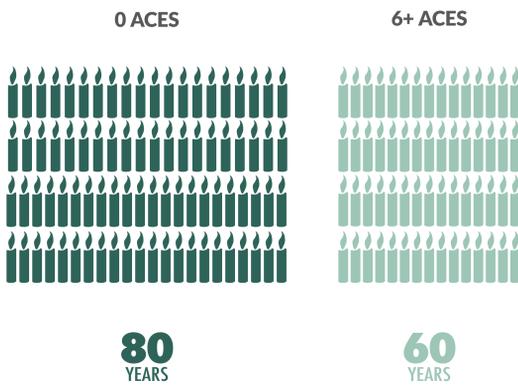


\*This pattern holds for the 40+ outcomes, but the exact risk values vary depending on the outcome.

## How do ACEs affect our society?

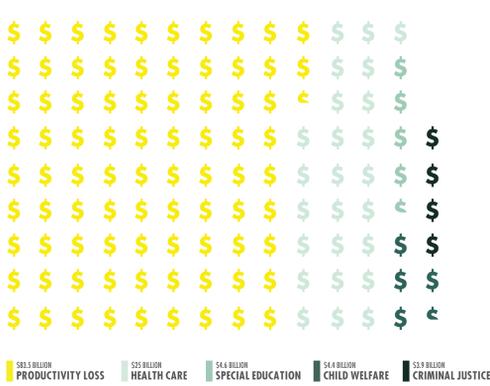
### LIFE EXPECTANCY

People with six or more ACEs died nearly **20 years earlier on average** than those without ACEs.



### ECONOMIC TOLL

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that the lifetime costs associated with child maltreatment total **\$124 billion**.



## What can be done about ACEs?

These wide-ranging health and social consequences underscore the importance of preventing ACEs before they happen. Essentials for Childhood: Assuring **safe, stable, nurturing relationships** and **environments** for all children can have a positive impact on a broad range of health problems and on the development of skills that will help children reach their full potential.

## How Relationships can Prevent ACEs

Safe, stable, nurturing relationships with parents and other adults in children's lives can be a strong protective factor against ACEs. Networks of support for parents are also essential for the health of parents as well as their children.

## How Environments can Prevent ACEs

Safe, stable, nurturing environments play a large role in preventing ACEs by creating a context and atmosphere that allows families to share quality time together, to discuss and resolve conflicts, and to provide emotional support to one another. Community and organizational decision-makers – both in the private and public sector (e.g. state and local health departments, media, businesses, schools and faith-based organizations) – also play an important part by developing policies that create conditions and resources that support safe, stable nurturing environments that benefit children and families.

## Strategies that address the needs of children and their families include:

### Home visiting to pregnant women and families with newborns

Voluntary home visiting programs can help families by strengthening maternal parenting practices, the quality of the child's home environment, and children's development.

### Parenting training programs

These programs work to change the quality of parent-child relationships and improve how parents and children interact with one another.

### Intimate partner violence prevention

Teen dating violence can set the stage for problems in future relationships, including intimate partner violence throughout life. Early prevention is needed to help teens develop respectful, non-violent relationship skills that can be carried forward into adult relationships.

### Social support for parents

Social support involves guidance, social reinforcement, practical assistance with the tasks of daily living, and social stimulation.

### ABC High quality child care

Preschool enrichment is important for long-term development and other outcomes, including violence. Access to high-quality child care is important, too, as it can affect parents' ability to work and to support a family as well as children's exposure to safe, stable and nurturing relationships and environments.

### Sufficient income support for lower income families

Living in poverty for low-income conditions can increase the risk for child maltreatment and partner violence. Income supports like cash transfers, tax credits, vouchers for food or housing, subsidies for child care and health insurance, unemployment insurance, or paid leave may provide some relief for parents.

## Helpful Links

[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy)  
<http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/index.php/aces-snapshot/>  
[www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/essentials](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/essentials)  
<https://www.childwelfare.gov/topics/preventing>

## Contact Info

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essentials for childhood

