

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACES)

What are ACEs?

The term *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (ACEs) refers to a range of events that a child can experience, which leads to stress and can result in trauma and chronic stress responses.

Adverse childhood experiences include

- *Emotional abuse*
- *Physical abuse*
- *Sexual abuse*
- *Emotional neglect*
- *Physical neglect*
- *Mother treated violently*
- *Household substance abuse*
- *Household mental illness*
- *Parental separation or divorce*
- *Incarcerated household member*

What is the impact of ACEs?

There is a positive relationship between the numbers of ACEs and a number of high-risk behaviors and negative health outcomes across the lifespan.

Evidence from the field of neuroscience clearly demonstrates that ongoing exposure to traumatic events in childhood (also commonly referred to as ACEs) -- such as physical or emotional abuse or neglect, witnessing or experiencing violence in the home or community, substance abuse or mental illness in the home, the absence of a parent due to divorce or incarceration, severe economic hardship, or discrimination -- disrupts brain development, leads to functional differences in learning, behaviors and health and is associated with both immediate and long-term impacts on health.

Multiple, chronic or persistent stress can impact a child's developing brain and has been linked in numerous studies to a variety of high-risk behaviors, including depression, anxiety, significant increased risk of suicide, teen pregnancy, physical acting out behaviors, truancy, etc.

Many of our students who have increased ACEs struggle with Toxic Stress.

Toxic stress response can occur when a child is exposed to severe, frequent or prolonged trauma without the adequate support needed from trusted adults. Toxic stress affects learning and development processes and can impact long-term health outcomes.