Adverse Childhood Experiences: ACEs and Juvenile Offenders*

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Discussion Topics

• What is the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study?

• What are ACEs?

• How do ACEs affect individuals?

• Studying ACEs in Florida

• Conclusion
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Robert F. Anda MD, Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
Vincent Felitti MD, Kaiser Permanente

- 17,000 people involved in a decade long study.
- Examined medical effects of adverse childhood experiences over the lifespan.
- Largest study ever done on this subject.
What Are ACEs and Why do they Matter?
Categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences

**Trauma in Child’s Household Environment**
- Substance abuse
- Parental separation or divorce
- Chronically depressed, emotionally disturbed or suicidal household member
- Mother treated violently
- Imprisoned household member
- Loss of parent (by death, by suicide, or by abandonment)

**Abuse of Child**
- Recurrent Severe Emotional abuse
- Recurrent Physical abuse
- Contact Sexual abuse

**Neglect of Child**
- Child’s basic physical and/or emotional needs unmet
Long-Term Neurobiological and Health Risk Behavior Impact

**Neurobiological Effects of Trauma**
- Disrupted neuro-development
- Difficulty controlling anger-rage
- Hallucinations
- Depression
- Panic reactions
- Anxiety
- Multiple (6+) somatic problems
- Sleep problems
- Impaired memory
- Flashbacks
- Dissociation
- Eating disorders
- Perpetrate interpersonal violence

**Health Risk Behaviors**
- Smoking
- Physical inactivity
- Suicide attempts
- Alcoholism
- Drug abuse
- 50+ sex partners
- Repetition of original trauma
- Self Injury
Long-Term Consequences of Unaddressed Trauma (ACEs)

**Serious Social Problems**
- Homelessness
- Prostitution
- Delinquency, violence, criminal behavior
- Inability to sustain employment
- Re-victimization: rape, DV
- Compromised ability to parent
- Intergenerational transmission of abuse
- Long-term use of health, behavioral health, correctional, and social services

**Disease and Disability**
- Ischemic heart disease
- Cancer
- Chronic lung disease
- Chronic emphysema
- Asthma
- Liver disease
- Skeletal fractures
- Poor self rated health status
- Sexually transmitted disease
- HIV/AIDS
- Severe obesity
Adverse Childhood Experiences are Common

Of the 17,000 HMO Members:

- 1 in 4 exposed to 2 categories of ACEs
- 1 in 16 was exposed to 4 categories.
- 22% were sexually abused as children.
- 66% of the women experienced abuse, violence or family strife in childhood.
The higher the ACE Score, the greater the likelihood of:

- Severe and persistent emotional problems
- Health risk behaviors
- Serious social problems
- Adult disease and disability
- High health and mental health care costs
- Poor life expectancy
Examples: Individual Health and ACEs
Childhood Experiences Underlie Chronic Depression

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Current Smoking

% Adult Smokers

ACE Score

0 1 2 3 4-5 6 or more

5.5% 6% 8% 10% 12% 16%

Childhood Experiences and Adult Alcoholism

ACE Score and the Risk of Perpetuation Domestic Violence

Risk of Perpetration (%)

Women

Men

ACE Score

Female

Male
Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

- Death
- Early Death
- Disease, Disability, and Social Problems
- Adoption of Health-risk Behaviors
- Social, Emotional, and Cognitive Impairment
- Disrupted Neurodevelopment
- Adverse Childhood Experiences

Research in Florida
The Relevance of Adverse Childhood Experiences in the Lives of Juvenile Offenders

Prevalence of ACE Score by Gender

Comparison of ACE Scores between Juvenile Offenders and Kaiser-Permanente Study

In Summary

- Adverse childhood experiences
  (trauma, abuse, family behavioral health problems)
  - Impact brain and nervous system, perception of self and others
  - Cause serious and chronic health, behavioral health and social problems
  - Epidemic proportions. Major public health issue
  - Often unrecognized, ignored or denied.