STRESS & EARLY BRAIN GROWTH Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

What are ACEs?

ACEs are serious childhood traumas -- a list is shown below -- that result in toxic stress that can harm a child's brain. This toxic stress may prevent a child from learning, from playing in a healthy way with other children, and can result in long-term health problems.

Adverse Childhood Experiences can include:

- 1. Emotional abuse
- 2. Physical abuse
- 3. Sexual abuse
- 4. Emotional neglect
- 5. Physical neglect
- 6. Mother treated violently
- 7. Household substance abuse
- 8. Household mental illness
- 9. Parental separation or divorce
- 10. Incarcerated household member
- 11. Bullying (by another child or adult)
- Witnessing violence outside the home
- Witness a brother or sister being abused
- Racism, sexism, or any other form of discrimination
- 15. Being homeless
- 16. Natural disasters and war

Exposure to childhood ACEs can increase the risk of:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- · Alcoholism and alcohol abuse
- · Depression
- · Illicit drug use
- · Heart disease
- · Liver disease
- · Multiple sexual partners
- · Intimate partner violence
- · Sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- · Smoking
- · Suicide attempts
- · Unintended pregnancies

How do ACEs affect health?

Through stress. Frequent or prolonged exposure to ACEs can create toxic stress which can damage the developing brain of a child and affect overall health.

