

Vision

Understanding how trauma impacts the adult learner leads to forming pedagogy and support services that form a critical lens through which the community college endeavors to support access and success in the post-secondary realm.

Mission

Promote understanding among the stakeholders in higher education and in the larger community of the profound impact trauma has on student success.

Goals

1. Progressively grow and sustain a culture of trauma-informed knowledge and best practices across the institution.
2. Research funding, design, and protocols for ethical and responsible Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE's) style questionnaire for the post-secondary community college in order to create an empirical portrait querying the link between trauma and academic resilience.
3. Develop a digital community resourcing and networking information regarding trauma and learning in higher education by means of literature, research, kiosk of events, lectures, publications, conferences, and continuing education.

Contact:

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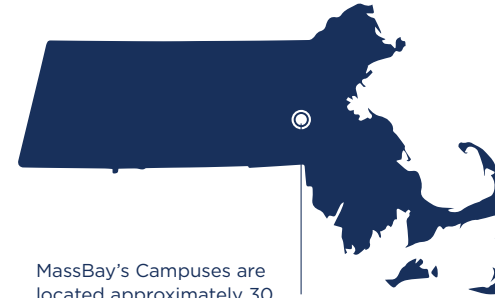
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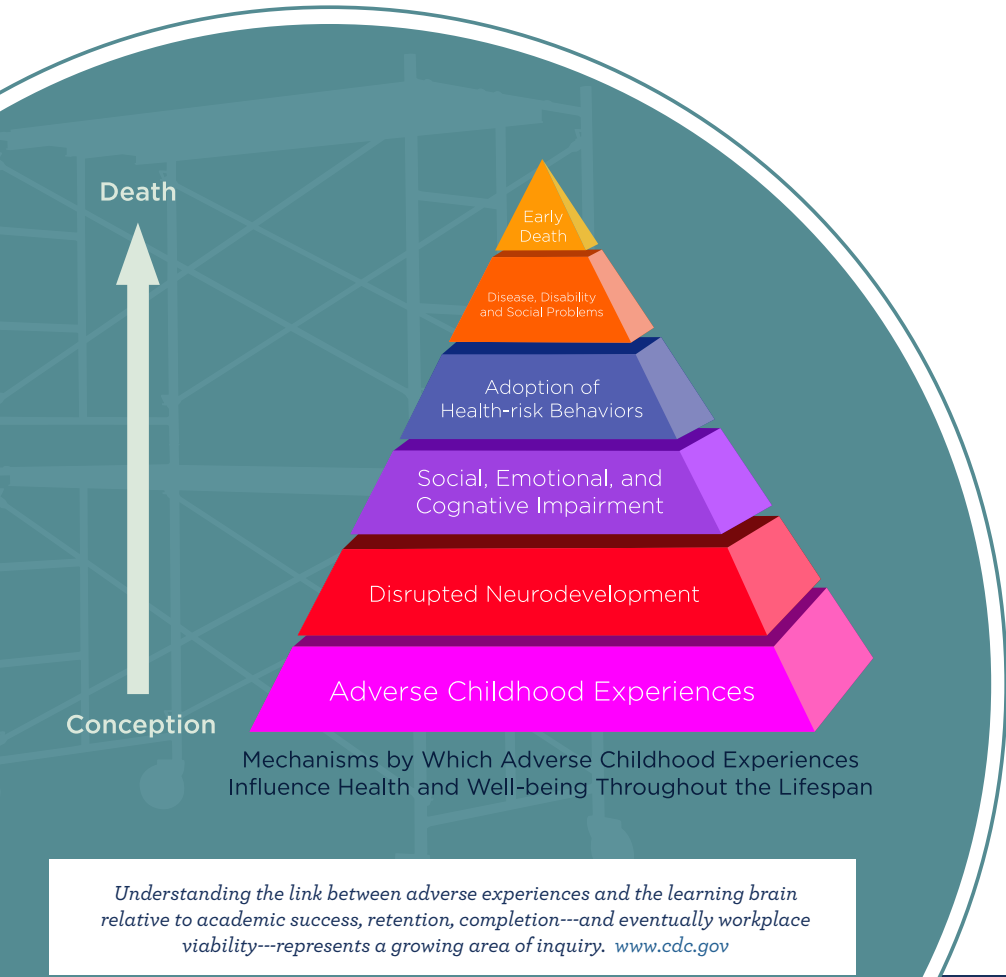
Center for Trauma and Learning in POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION



The National Prevalence of Trauma

While traumatic experiences used to be thought of as uncommon, leading health organizations including the **Center for Disease Control (CDC)** now recognize trauma as not only commonplace, but prevalent. An estimated 70 percent of adults in the United States have experienced a traumatic event at least once in their lives, and up to 20 percent of these people go on to develop **Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**.

The ongoing **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)** study represents a major shift in quantifying trauma's prevalence by looking at how physical and psychological adversity in childhood up to age 18 correlate to development of risk factors for disease, and well-being throughout life. **The ACE Pyramid** represents the conceptual framework for the ACE Study.



The Prevalence of Trauma in Community College

MassBay Community College students, similar to many other public two year educational institutions nationwide, have been disproportionately exposed to traumatic experiences: veterans returning from Iraq, Afghanistan and other arenas in the Global War on Terror, students and families displaced by political and social upheaval, by natural disasters, by domestic and community violence, by addiction.



Further, many community college students encounter the challenges and opportunities higher education presents with fewer financial resources, often reflecting generations spent in the grip of systemic poverty. The recent Wisconsin HOPE lab study found that food insecurity affects roughly two-thirds of community college students, about half experience shelter insecurity, and 14% report homelessness. These socio-economic stressors not only conflict with the practical and intellectual demands of pursuing higher education, but according to Executive Director of Institutional Assessment at University of Central Oklahoma **Cia Verschelden's** *Bandwidth Recovery*, reduces the cognitive resources and mental bandwidth necessary to "learning, persisting, and graduating."

Why is Understanding Trauma Relevant to Academic Success?

Trauma affects traditional benchmarks of post-secondary success including retention, course completion, and graduation. While psychological resilience is the norm---and community college students demonstrate extraordinary personal resilience---**academic resilience** is less certain.

Interruptions in school attendance due to relocation and displacement, for example, adversely impact learning, especially the sequential demands of mathematics, creating gaps that must be remediated. Overwhelming stress, violence, or trauma in the family or neighborhood impact critical skills such as stress management, memory, attention, and planning. As an affordable gateway to higher education, community colleges provide certainly widen access, and its pedagogy and programming are among the most skilled and diverse in the nation. Yet our communities still bear the history of systemic inequality expressed via discrimination and outright violence. Consciously or unconsciously experienced, these dynamics constitute costly individual stress and injury (allostatic load) upon the labor and relationships core to college success.



In fact, trauma-informed and trauma-sensitive educational reforms represent some of the most significant in the last 20 years. Thanks to organizations such as the Trauma and Learning Policy Institute and the Trauma Sensitive Schools, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' Safe and Supportive Schools Initiative, and the Compassionate Schools in Washington State, the impact of trauma and toxic stress for children K-12 is coming into sharper focus. However, trauma's impact does not simply arrest when young people age out of elementary and secondary school. The committed persistence and striving for success so valuable to educational, workplace, and community progress in this 21st century means that community colleges must take into account the adverse toll of trauma so that pedagogy and practice promotes resilience. In simplest terms, trauma matters because it impacts retention and graduation.