

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

## Information for Law Enforcement

### WHAT ARE ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events that occur before age 18.

Examples include:

- Abuse or neglect
- Bullying or exclusion
- Poverty or homelessness
- Discrimination
- Household substance abuse
- Witnessing violence
- Household mental illness
- Divorce, deportation, other family separation
- Natural disasters or war



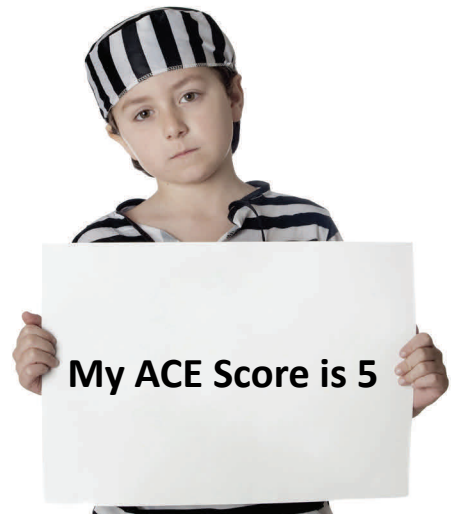
### ACEs IMPACT ON LAW ENFORCEMENT

Many individuals involved in the corrections system have been exposed to a range of traumatic experiences. History of trauma can impact behavior and influence the way an individual interacts with law enforcement staff and the system. History of trauma can also impact the way a person presents for questioning. An individual impacted by trauma may have a fragmented memory or have gaps in their memory. They may be unable to recall events in chronological order or suffer from dissociation (a mismatch between facial expression and thought or mood). Law enforcement officials should be mindful of the impact trauma has on the functioning of individuals, especially those involved in the corrections system.



### THE IMPACT OF ACEs

In Oregon, 65% of adults<sup>1</sup> and 51% of children<sup>2</sup> have been exposed to at least one ACE. ACEs can have long lasting effects on individuals and communities. ACEs can cause changes to the brain which can impact learning, memory, and the ability to handle stress. ACEs have also been associated with increased health-risk behaviors, criminality, mental health disorders, violence, substance abuse, suicide attempts, promiscuity, and chronic disease.



1. <http://www.preventionlane.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/ACEs-Brief-2014.pdf>  
2. <http://www.childhealthdata.org/>

## RE-TRAUMATIZATION

Individuals can be unintentionally re-traumatized by workplace practices and procedures. Putting forth an effort to become educated on the signs and symptoms of trauma and responding sensitively to the symptoms of trauma in victims, witnesses, parolees, perpetrators and prisoners alike, will help to reduce recidivism, disciplinary infractions, use of seclusion and restraint, and relapse and treatment failure.



## WHAT LAW ENFORCEMENT CAN DO

- Recognize symptoms of traumatic stress
- Collect information regarding all traumas
- Seek to understand how past trauma may affect functioning
- Coordinate services and interviews with other agencies to prevent re-traumatization
- Help individuals understand the connection between past trauma and present behavior
- Refer individuals to trauma-informed services for treatment and follow-up
- Integrate trauma-informed principles into everyday procedure



## COMMON SYMPTOMS OF TRAUMA

- Inability to make appropriate decisions
- Inability to regulate emotions
- Inability to trust
- Fragmented sense of self and identity
- Self-medication or substance abuse
- Disengagement or emotional detachment
- Aggressive or impulsive behavior
- Confusion or difficulty concentrating
- Anxiety or nervousness
- Self-injurious or sexualized behaviors
- Hypervigilance
- Abnormal startle response
- Intrusive memories or flashbacks
- Insomnia or nightmares



### Resources:

#### Washington County Educational Resources

<http://www.co.washington.or.us/HHS/ChildrenYouthFamilies/>

#### National Child Traumatic Stress Network

<http://www.nctsn.org/>

#### Policy Research Associates, Inc.

<http://www.prainc.com/>

#### Johns Hopkins Urban Health Institute

[http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/\\_PDFs/SDH\\_2015\\_Brief\\_2.pdf](http://urbanhealth.jhu.edu/_PDFs/SDH_2015_Brief_2.pdf)

#### Pandora's Project

<http://www.pandys.org/articles/invisibleepidemic.html>

#### The National Center for Victims of Crime

<https://www.victimsofcrime.org/>

