

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Information for Faith-Based Organizations



THE ACE STUDY is the largest study ever conducted to assess the connection between childhood trauma and adult health and well-being. A study of over 17,000 participants found that exposure to ACEs can harm a child's brain and lead to major health problems such as: obesity, diabetes, heart disease, lung cancer, STDs, depression, even attempted suicide.

WHAT ARE ACEs?

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

Examples include:

- Abuse and neglect
- Bullying or exclusion
- Poverty
- Homelessness
- Discrimination
- Household substance abuse
- Witnessing violence
- Household mental illness
- Divorce, deportation, other family separation



FAITH-BASED ORGS & PUBLIC HEALTH

Some of the most prevalent health and social problems stem from ACEs. The more ACEs an individual experiences the more at risk they are for negative health outcomes. Research has shown that most people with one ACE are very likely to have several others, which increases their risk for long-term health problems.

Partnerships with faith-based organizations (FBOs) are important to further any public health initiative. FBOs are often the first source of support for individuals seeking help and information after adversity. Therefore, leaders in this sector can be important messengers in a campaign to increase community knowledge about ACEs and their potential impact on mental and physical health.



ACEs are common regardless of age, race or income. In Oregon, 65% of adults¹ and 51% of children² have experienced at least one ACE.

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



THERE IS HOPE

Not everyone who has experienced an ACE will develop bad habits or have poor health. **Resilience** is a buffer against the negative impact of ACEs. Resilient people are able to handle adversity due to their own emotional strength, courage and discipline or because they have come across people or activities that encouraged the development of their resilience.

Affiliations with Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) can promote resiliency. FBOs provide safe and welcoming spaces where people impacted by trauma can find the support they need to “bounce back” or return to being healthy and happy after something bad has happened. Spiritual beliefs also promote positive life principles and help individuals develop a sense of purpose and value.



FBOs are an important community resource for children and families. FBOs provide social support, and religion can even serve as a coping mechanism for victims of trauma.

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS CAN HELP BY

- Normalizing adversity.
 - Promoting awareness of ACEs and their impact.
 - Promoting self-esteem building activities, such as participating in self-improvement programs.
 - Becoming “trauma-sensitive” or providing trauma-informed services.
 - Recognizing the signs and symptoms of traumatic stress such as: poor self-esteem, disengagement, maladaptive coping strategies, difficulty regulating emotions or maintaining stable, trusting relationships.
 - Encouraging individuals who are struggling with mental health issues or substance abuse problems to seek trauma-informed treatment.
 - Making your congregation aware of the resources available to assist with food insecurity, housing, healthcare, childcare and parenting.
- Dial 211 toll free for referrals.**



Resources:

Washington County Educational Resources

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

Essentials for Childhood Framework

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childmaltreatment/>

Full House With ACEs

<http://fullhousewithaces.com/>

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

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

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

<http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>

The Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health

<http://www.childhealthdata.org/home>

