Adverse Childhood Experiences

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are preventable, traumatic events that occur in childhood, that can potentially lead to negative near- and long-term health outcomes (CDC, 2019).

Key Points:
- Trauma informed supports can mitigate the effects of adversity by fostering inclusion and helping families and children manage stress
- Promoting positive social norms about parenting and acceptable parenting behaviors or destigmatizing mental health care can reduce the incidence and limit the harmful impact of ACEs.

How this factsheet can help prevent ACEs

The data presented are measures that influence the occurrence of ACEs, but they are not ACE scores. These measures help spot potential areas of improvement and make decisions on the best line of action.

Strategy 1: Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families

The graph below shows the housing burden for the region as the percentage of housing units that spend nearly 30% or more of their monthly income on housing costs. It is generally recommended that a maximum of 30% of monthly income go towards housing costs; anything more represents a housing-cost burden. Housing costs include mortgage and rent payments as well as taxes, insurance, and utility costs. As shown in the graph, a fifth or more housing units in each county spend at least 30% of their monthly income on housing, with Liberty county residents spending over 35%.


GA Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan (CANPP)

The data presented align with select strategies from the GA Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan (CANPP).

The following CANPP strategies were selected to implement by a team of community stakeholders:

1. Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families
2. Promote trauma-informed training for all school personnel.

To learn more about the CANPP, visit: https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/
Strategy 2: Promote trauma-informed training for all school personnel.

Students in this region have self-reported experiencing anxiety, depression, and traumatic events like bullying, fighting, etc. These events can impact the ability to concentrate in school or make meaningful positive relationships. Promoting trauma-informed training can help school personnel identify and respond to the trauma students are experiencing. Trauma-informed practices can create a more inclusive school environment that fosters resilience and supports positive childhood experience.

The map below shows the percentage of students in grades 6-12 who were above the state median of a composite score that reflects student behaviors associated with ACEs. The measures considered in the composite score are from the Georgia Student Health Survey (2019) and are related to the behaviors - bullying, fighting, substance use, anxiety/depression, and self-harm. A higher percentage represents a greater rate of students in grades 6-12 reporting behaviors that have been associated with ACEs or that are ACEs.

Interventions that address these behaviors (i.e., bullying, fighting, etc.) will have the greatest effect on reducing the ACE composite score. The top three leading contributors to the composite score in all counties in this region are anxiety/depression, bullying, and self-harm, in that order.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Essentials for Childhood: Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments

SAMHSA's Trauma and Justice Strategic Initiative, 2014.

A higher percentage represents a greater rate of students in grades 6-12 reporting behaviors that have been associated with ACEs or that are ACEs.

The top three contributors to the composite score for all counties (in order).
Anxiety/Depression, Bullying, Self-Harm

Data source: Georgia School Health Survey
Preventing the Impact of ACEs

The most impactful prevention strategies, such as those found in the CANPP, offer real solutions at the family, society, and community levels. Communities that have affordable housing, opportunities for economic mobility, and low occurrences of violence have the most potential to create healthy and vibrant environments where children can thrive. Policies and programs that promote early education, mental health, and caring relationships can lessen the stressful load some families experience and by doing so, limit exposure to and prevent the negative impact of ACEs.

Evidence-based Prevention Programs

Evidence based programs are scientifically proven to promote health and prevent disease. Listed here are just a few evidence-based programs that lessen the harms of ACEs:

- Coastal Coalition for Children, Inc.: https://cc4children.org/
- South Georgia Healthy Start: https://www.southgeorgiahealthystart.org/

Helpful Resources

- Belonging for Hope: www.belongingforhope.org
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan: abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/
- Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/preventingace-datatoaction.html
- Prevent Child Abuse Georgia: abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu
- Essentials for Childhood: abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/essentials/

Looking for more ACE and ACE-related data like the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS), Georgia Student Health Survey (GSHS), and other sources?

Visit our website at https://iprce.emory.edu/pace-d2a.html