

# PREVENTING ACES - DATA FOR DECISION MAKING

DFCS Region 14: DeKalb and Fulton Counties

## Adverse Childhood Experiences

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

### Key Points:

- Trauma-informed practices recognize and respond to the signs, symptoms, and risks of trauma to better support the needs of people who have experienced ACEs. Trauma-informed care is an approach defined by treating the whole person, considering past trauma and resulting behaviors and health outcomes (Resilient GA).
- 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.

## 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). To learn more about the CANPP, visit: <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/>

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

1. Promote child-friendly and trauma-aware practices in the courts, law enforcement, and corrections systems.
2. Increase access to evidence-based or research-informed programs for parenting skills and support that help parents/caregivers understand all stages of their child's development.
3. Promote policies that ensure at-risk families receive evidence-based parenting education.
4. Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families.

## How this factsheet can help prevent ACEs

The data presented are measures that influence the occurrence of ACEs. These measures represent potential targets for interventions and are presented to help communities make decisions on the best lines of action.

---

### Strategy 1: Promote child-friendly and trauma-aware practices in the courts, law enforcement, and corrections systems.

Increasing community knowledge and awareness of ACEs is an important strategy for improving understanding of ACEs, their impacts, and how to prevent them. Schools, health services, and other sectors can learn about their role in preventing ACEs and how to best provide and promote safe, stable, and supportive environments for children. The justice system is one of the many sectors that are vital to preventing and mitigating the immediate and long-term harms of ACEs (CDC 2019). Promotion of trauma-informed care and victim-centered services within the legal and court systems can help to intervene to lessen immediate and long-term harms.

In Region 14, 5.4%\* of adults surveyed in the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (2020), when they were <18 years old, lived with someone who was incarcerated. This is lower than the Georgia rate, which was 7.2%\*. Further, 18.3% reported that, when they were < 18 years old, they lived with parents or caregivers that slapped, hit, kicked, or punched each other. This is slightly higher than the Georgia rate of 17.2%.

## Strategy 2: Increase access to evidence-based or research-informed programs for parenting skills and support that help parents/caregivers understand all stages of their child's development.

Families who create safe, stable, and nurturing relationships are less likely to experience ACEs. Skill-based parenting and family relationship approaches reduce risk factors for child abuse and neglect and protect children and youth from multiple forms of violence and other health compromising behaviors (CDC 2019).

Percent of children, birth through 4, enrolled in WIC, by county

County	Percent
Fulton	8.3
DeKalb	16.3

Data Source: Georgia Department of Public Health (2020). Obtained from Kids Count Data Center

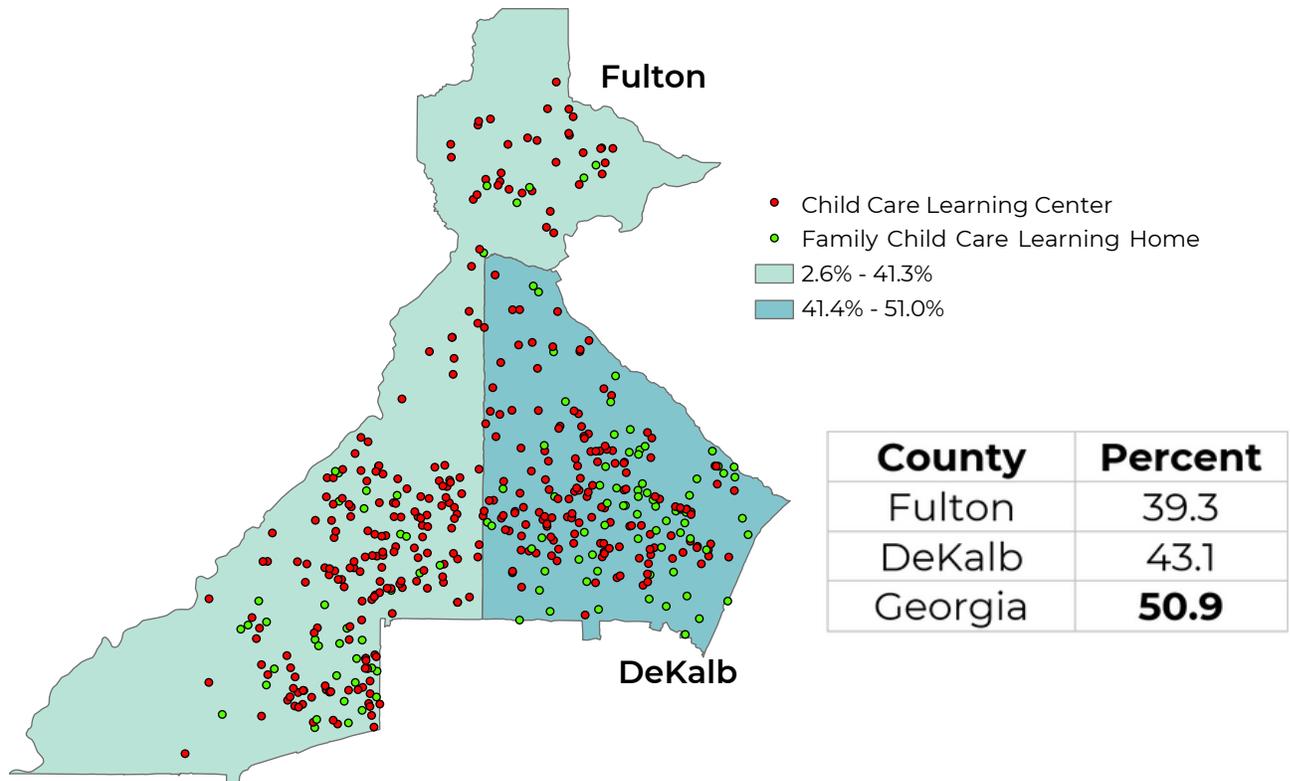
**Early education** plays an important role in the healthy brain development of children. Early education programs ensure a strong start for children by helping them develop physical, emotional, social, behavioral, and intellectual capacities. Access to high-quality childcare and preschool programs can help children build a strong foundation for future learning and opportunities while acting as a buffer against rough home environments, child behavioral problems, parental stress and depression, and child abuse and neglect. Early education programs can help prevent ACEs by providing information about ACEs and their impacts, caregiver support, and training about child health and development. Providing these resources can help families build a safe and supportive home environment.

The map below shows the percent of 3- and 4-year-olds not enrolled in preschool. In some counties in this region, more than 3 out of 4 children are not enrolled in preschool. The dots on the map represent the locations of Quality Rated Early Learning Programs in the region.



\*Adjusted for age, gender, and race

## Percent of 3- and 4-year-olds not in preschool, by county, & quality-rated early education programs



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five Year Estimates (2016-2020). Obtained from Kids Count Data Center. Quality-Rates Early Education Programs obtained from Prevent Child Abuse Georgia.

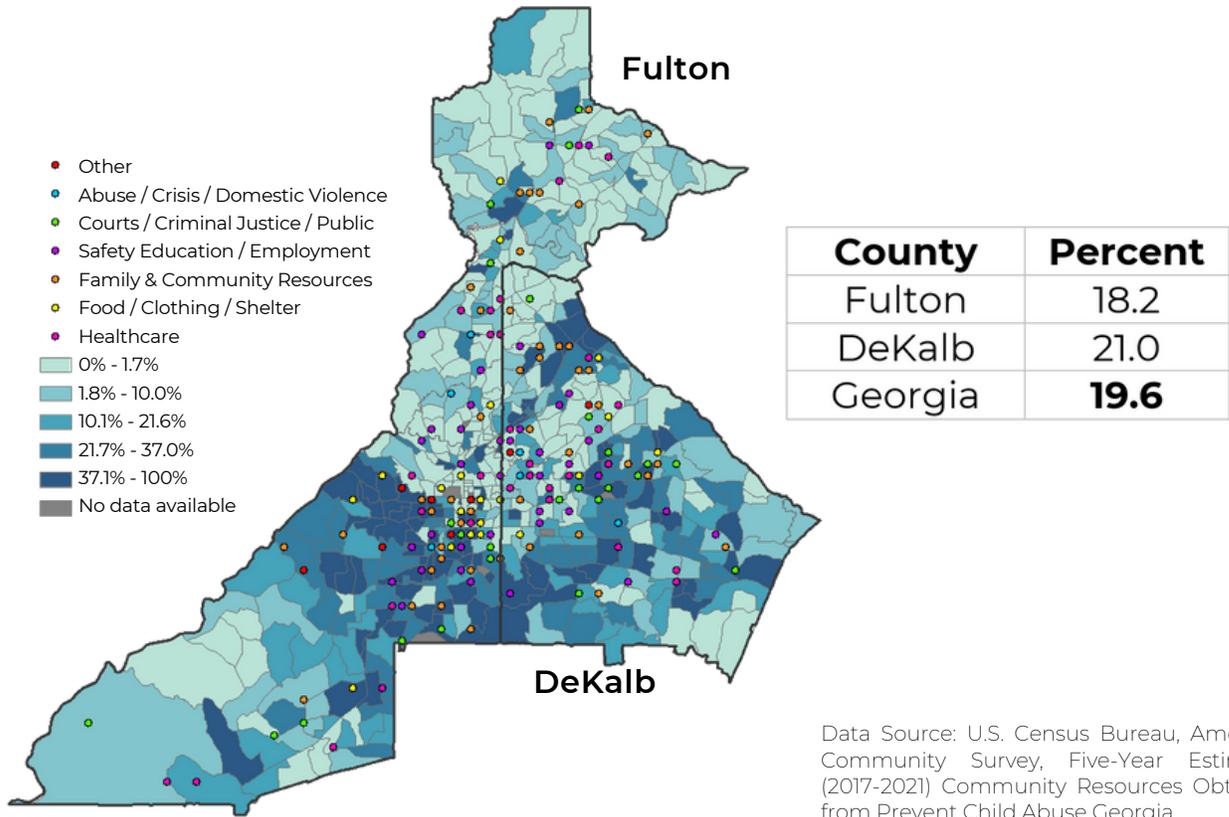
### Strategy 3: Promote policies that ensure at-risk families receive evidence-based parenting education.

ACEs and associated social determinants of health like poverty can cause toxic stress. Some children may face further exposure to toxic stress from historical and ongoing traumas due to the impacts of multigenerational poverty resulting from limited educational and economic opportunities. This toxic stress can negatively impact cognitive processes and harm the nervous and immune systems (CDC 2022). Children in poverty is highly variable in this region and some counties in this region over 50% of children in families that live below the poverty level.

Trauma-informed practices and resources can help mitigate the harmful impact of toxic stress. Providing **family supports**, including parenting education, can also prevent the occurrence of ACEs. The dots on the map below show the locations of community resources in the region.



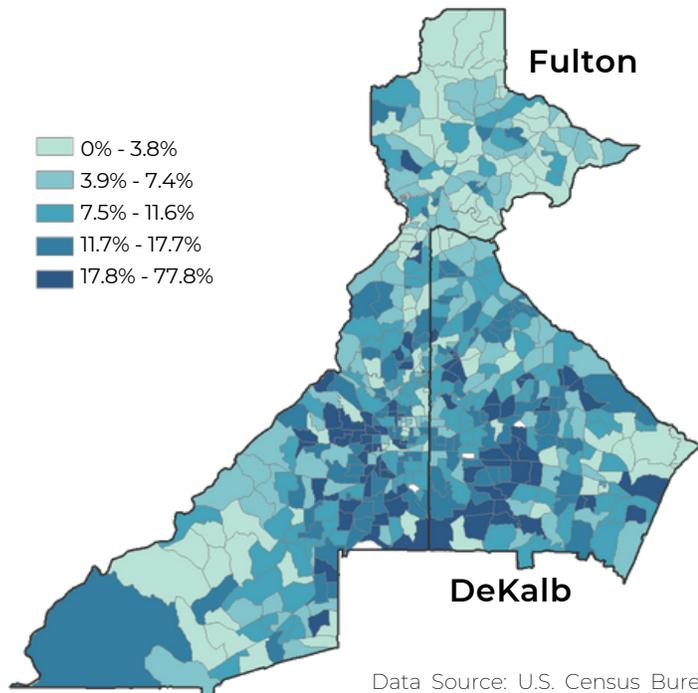
## Percent of Children in Families Below 100% of the Poverty Level, by Census Tract & Community Resources



### Strategy 4: Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families.

Poverty and economic instability create high stress environments and conditions that put children at risk of experiencing ACEs. **High housing costs** may make it difficult for families to cover costs for things like healthy food or medical care. It also leads to familial stress, mental health issues, and increased risk of disease (Healthy People 2030). Policies and programs that support economic stability by making housing, food, education, or healthcare more affordable or assisting with employment can reduce poverty and prevent ACEs.

### Percent of Housing Units that are Vacant, by Census Tract



## 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:

- Family Support Council, Inc: <http://www.familysupportcouncil.com/>
- Preferred Family Resource: <https://preferredfamilyresource.com/>



## Helpful Resources

- Find Help GA: <https://findhelpga.org/>
- Belonging for Hope: [www.belongingforhope.org](http://www.belongingforhope.org)
- Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Plan: [abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/](http://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/canpp/)
- Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: [www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/preventingace-datatoaction.html](http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/preventingace-datatoaction.html)
- Prevent Child Abuse Georgia: [abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu](http://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu)
- Essentials for Childhood: [abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/essentials/](http://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/essentials/)
- Peach Parenting: <https://peachparenting.org/>
- DECAL Developmental Milestones: <https://development.dec.al.ga.gov/#/>
- Georgia System of Care: <https://gasystemofcare.org/>
- Resilient Georgia: <https://www.resilientga.org/>



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 [iprce.emory.edu/PACE-D2A.html](http://iprce.emory.edu/PACE-D2A.html)

# REFERENCES

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019). Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Leveraging the Best Available Evidence. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2021,). Risk and protective factors. Violence Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2022,). Fast Facts: Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences. Violence Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/riskprotectivefactors.html>

Fortson, B. L., Klevens, J., Merrick, M. T., Gilbert, L. K., & Alexander, S. P. (2016). Preventing child abuse and neglect: A technical package for policy, norm, and programmatic activities. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Healthy People 2030. Housing and Homes. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/browse-objectives/housing-and-homes>

Learning card: Trauma Informed. Resilient Georgia. <https://www.resilientga.org/trauma-informed>

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. Preventing ACEs. Essentials for Childhood. <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/essentials/#PreventACES>

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia. Training. <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/training/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014.