

PREVENTING ACES - DATA FOR DECISION MAKING

DFCS Region 2: Banks, Dawson, Forsyth, Franklin, Habersham, Hall, Hart, Lumpkin, Rabun, Stephens, Towns, Union and White 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 policies that ensure at-risk families receive evidence-based parenting education.
2. Increase community knowledge and awareness of the incidence and long-term impact of childhood abuse and neglect, as well as how to accurately recognize and report suspected cases.
3. Expand efforts to develop safe and decent affordable housing for families.
4. Promote the development of transition plans for state-placed children and youth and engage families in the planning process.
5. Expand trauma-informed practices and resources across the state as well as increase understanding about the prevalence and impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adverse community environments.

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.

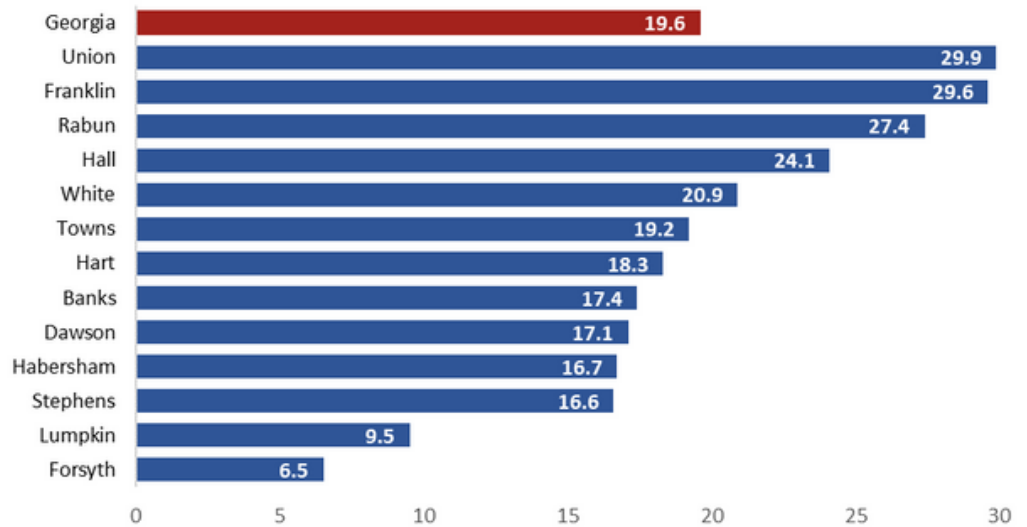


Strategy 1: Promote policies that ensure at-risk families receive evidence-based parenting education.

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 varies widely in this region and some counties in this region have nearly 30% of children in families that live below the poverty level.

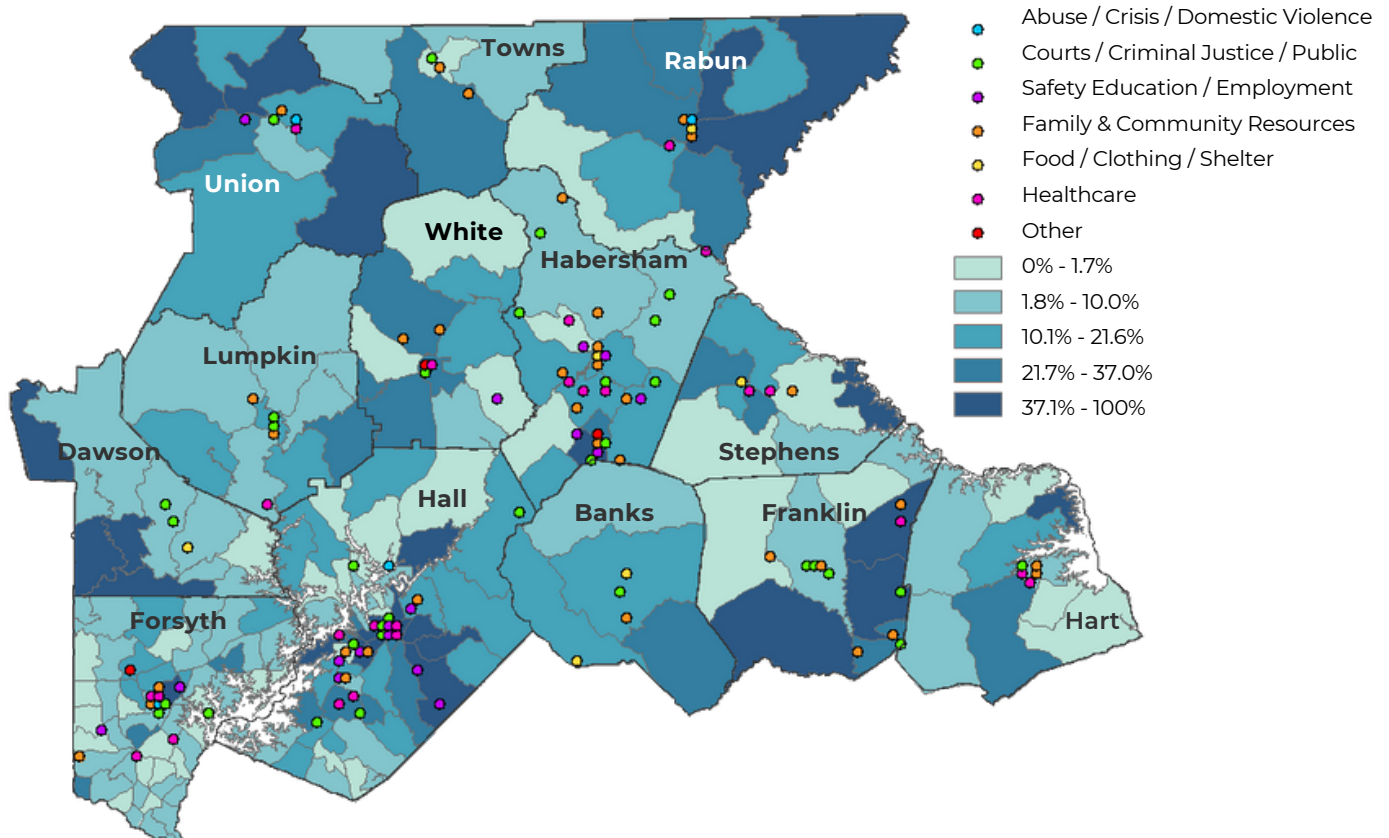
Trauma-informed practices and resources can help mitigate the harmful impact of toxic stress. Providing family supports, including parenting education, can also prevent the occurrence of ACEs. The dots on the map below show the locations of community resources in the region.

Percent of children in families below 100% of the poverty level, by county



Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

Percent of children in families below 100% of the poverty level, by census tract & community resources



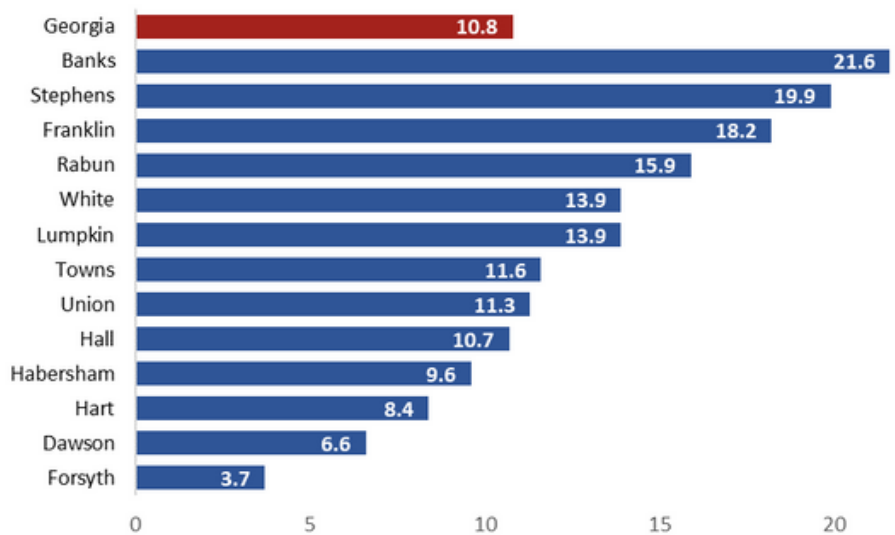
Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2016-2020). Community Resources Obtained from Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

Strategy 2: Increase community knowledge and awareness of the incidence and long-term impact of childhood abuse and neglect, as well as how to accurately recognize and report suspected cases.

The chart to the right shows the number of children subject of maltreatment investigations at the county level from June 2021 through May 2022. While the numbers vary from 3.7 to 21.6 per 10,000 children, any level of maltreatment is worrisome. These data help bring attention to the incidence of child abuse and neglect in this region.

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia is an organization that works to increase public awareness of child abuse prevention and recognition of suspected child abuse and neglect cases. Click [here](#) to learn more about their public trainings. Find supportive family resources at [Find Help Georgia](#).

Maltreatment investigations per 10,000 children, by county

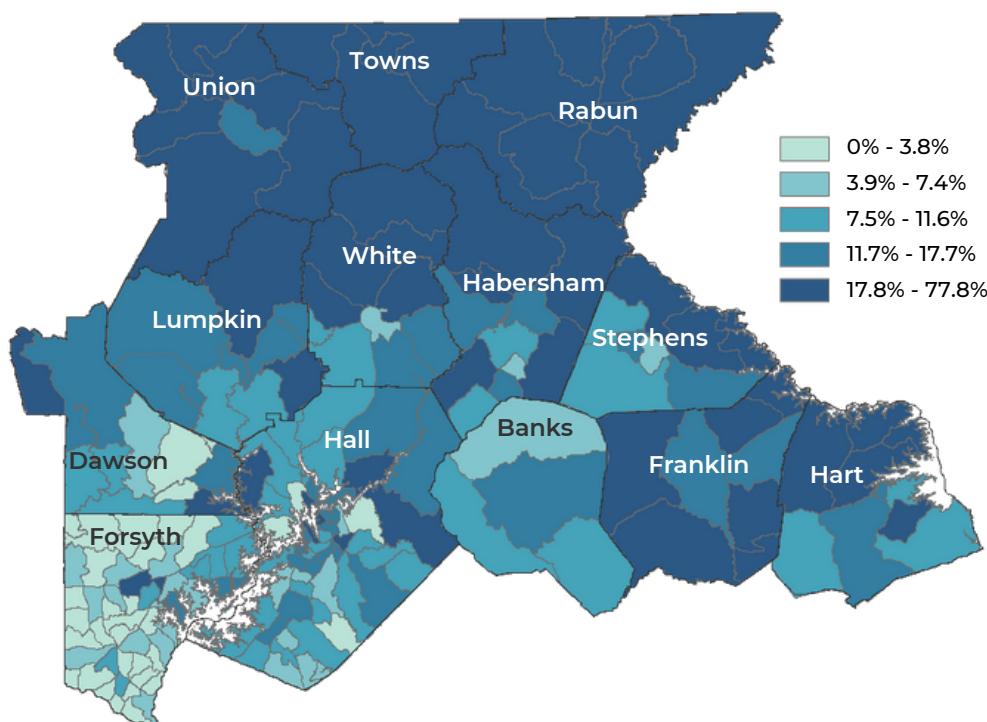


Data Source: Division of Family and Child Services (June 2021 through May 2022). Obtained from Fostering Court Improvement

Strategy 3: 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



Percent of renter households for whom gross rent (contract rent plus tenant-paid utilities) is 30% or more of household income, by county.

County	Percent
Franklin	28.8
Union	31.8
Banks	35.5
White	37.0
Habersham	37.6
Towns	40.1
Rabun	40.9
Stephens	42.0
Lumpkin	43.1
Forsyth	43.7
Hart	43.7
Dawson	46.8
Hall	46.9
Georgia	46.0

Strategy 4: Promote the development of transition plans for state-placed children and youth and engage families in the planning process.

Students in this region have self-reported experiencing anxiety, depression, and traumatic events like bullying and fighting. These events can impact the ability to concentrate in school or make meaningful positive relationships. **Bullying, fighting, depression and anxiety, and substance use** are behaviors that are strongly associated with ACEs.

Improving mental health access for children and providing them with strong support systems are powerful ways to prevent these outcomes. For instance, connecting students to supportive adults through mentorship programs, involvement in religious activities, or after school programs or activities can promote feelings of belonging and engagement in school and decrease the occurrence of these mental health challenges (CDC 2019). 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 experiences (PCA GA).



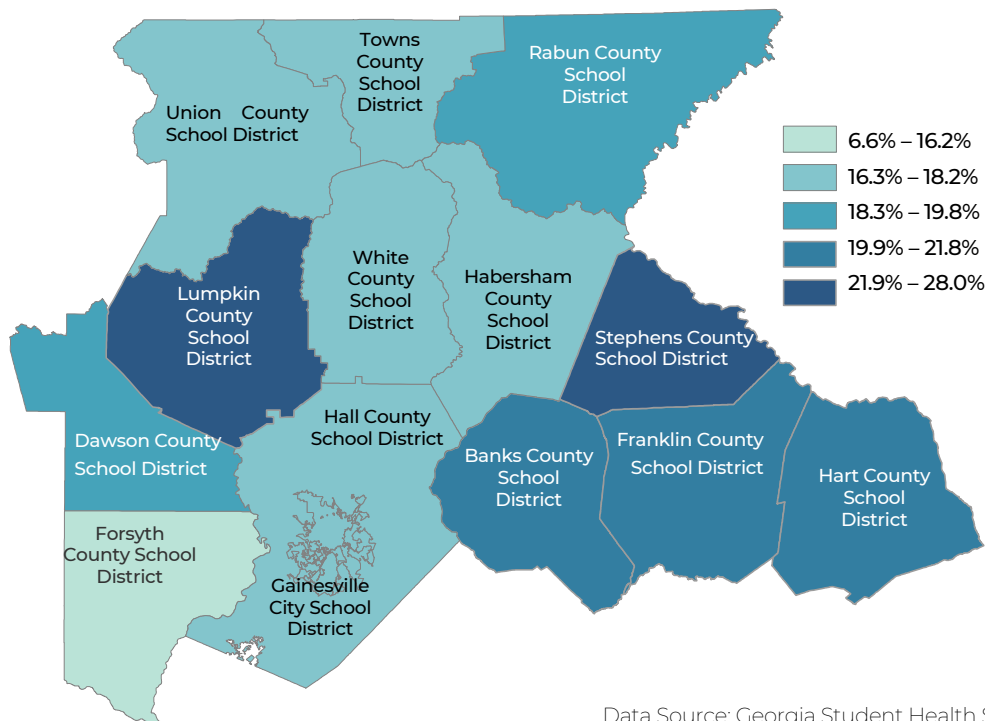
Percent of 6th-12th grade students who reported having experienced intense anxiety, worries or fears that got in the way of daily activities in the past 30 days, by school district

School District	Percent
Forsyth County	27.5
Towns County	27.5
Banks County	28.8
Hart County	29.1
Gainesville City	29.4
Dawson County	29.5
Rabun County	30.0
White County	30.7
Union County	31.2
Lumpkin County	31.6
Hall County	32.7
Franklin County	33.7
Habersham County	33.9
Stephens County	34.2
Georgia	29.4

Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

In Region 2, more than one quarter of 6th-12th grade students in every school district reported having experienced intense anxiety, worries or fears that got in the way of daily activities in the past 30 days, with many school systems exceeding one third of students. Bullying was also common, with more than 1 in 5 students reporting having been bullied or threatened at school in several districts. Having had 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row (within a couple of hours) in the past 30 days was strongly associated with other behaviors involving the use of drugs and alcohol.

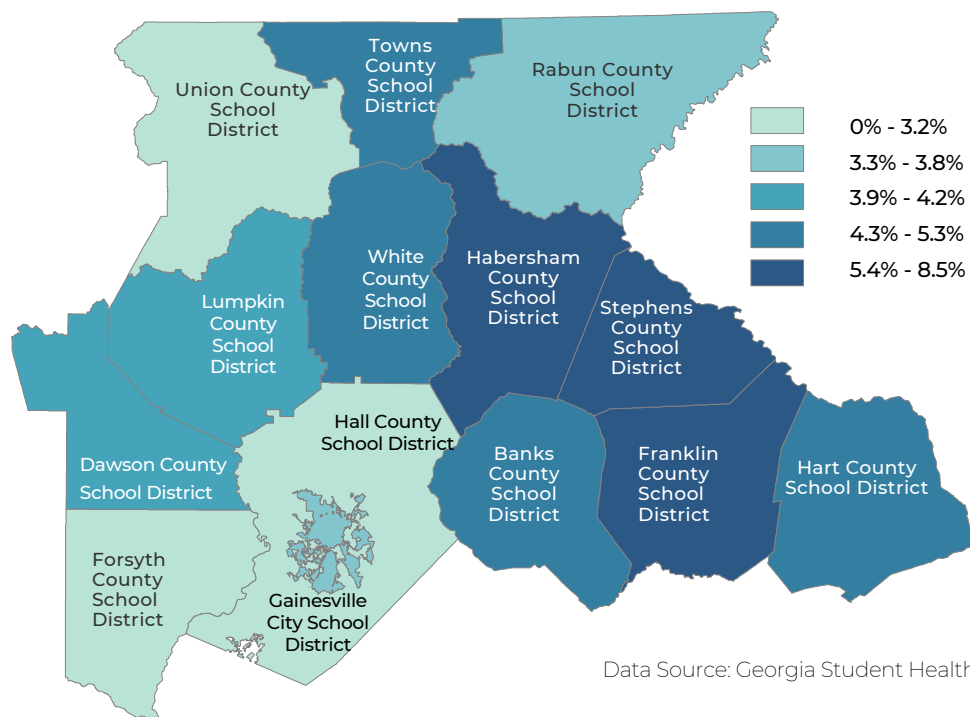
Percent of 6th-12th grade students who reported having been bullied or threatened by other students. by school district



School District	Percent
Forsyth County	12.4
Habersham County	16.3
Gainesville City	17.1
Hall County	17.1
Union County	17.3
White County	17.7
Towns County	18.1
Rabun County	19.4
Dawson County	19.8
Franklin County	20.3
Banks County	21.0
Hart County	21.2
Lumpkin County	21.9
Stephens County	25.4
Georgia	17.3

Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

Percent of 6th-12th grade students who reported having had 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row in the past 30 days, by school district



School District	Percent
Union County	2.9
Forsyth County	2.9
Hall County	3.0
Rabun County	3.6
Gainesville City	3.8
Lumpkin County	4.1
Dawson County	4.3
Towns County	4.3
White County	4.4
Banks County	4.8
Hart County	5.0
Habersham County	5.4
Franklin County	5.6
Stephens County	5.7
Georgia	3.8

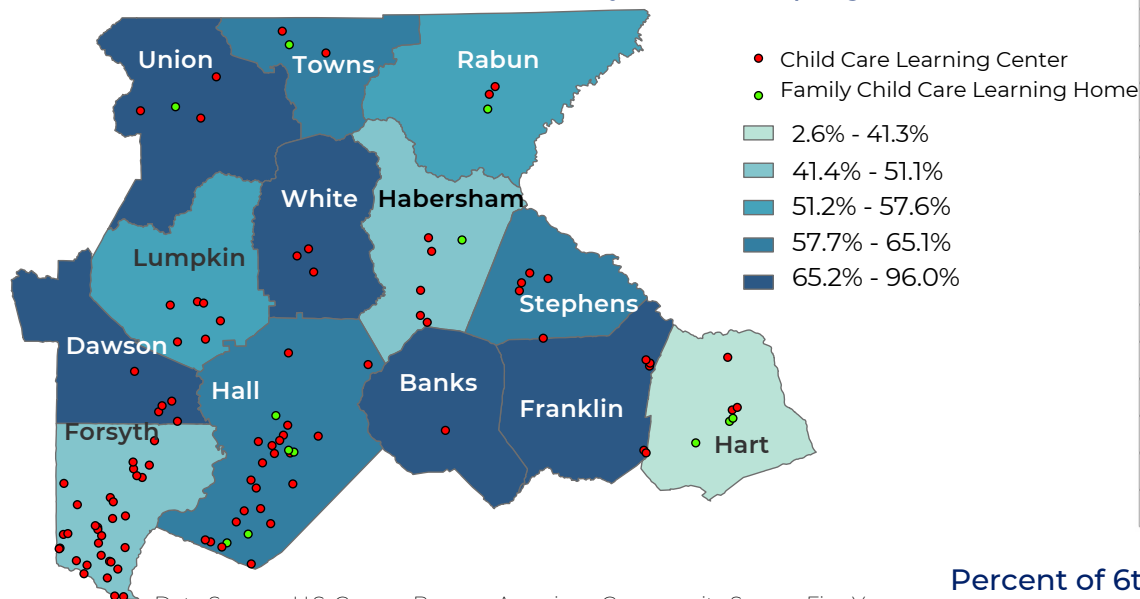
Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

Strategy 5: Expand trauma-informed practices and resources across the state and increase understanding about the prevalence and impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) and adverse community environments

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.

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 PCA Georgia.

County	Percent
Hart	35.0
Forsyth	41.7
Habersham	51.1
Lumpkin	54.1
Rabun	55.8
Hall	60.4
Stephens	62.7
Towns	64.0
Dawson	66.5
Union	74.5
Franklin	76.7
Banks	77.3
White	96.0
Georgia	50.9

Percent of 6th-12th grade students who reported they feel connected to others at school, by school district

School District	Percent
Gainesville City	91.9
Hart County	92.3
Banks County	92.6
Stephens County	92.6
Hall County	94.0
Dawson County	94.1
Towns County	94.2
Lumpkin County	94.3
Franklin County	94.5
Habersham County	94.8
White County	95.0
Rabun County	95.4
Union County	95.7
Forsyth County	96.1
Georgia	92.7

Having meaningful and supportive relationships with peers and adults can mitigate the effects of ACEs and promote resilience in children: the CDC lists 'children who have positive friendships and peer networks' and 'children who have caring adults outside the family who serve as mentors/role models' as two of their ACEs protective factors (CDC 2021). Schools are an important place for children to access positive peer networks and caring adults, particularly when ACEs create instability in the home.

In Region 2, students reported feeling highly connected to others at school; in all school districts, between 91.9% (Gainesville City School District) and 96.1% (Forsyth County School District) of 6th-12th grade students reported they feel connected to others at school.

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.

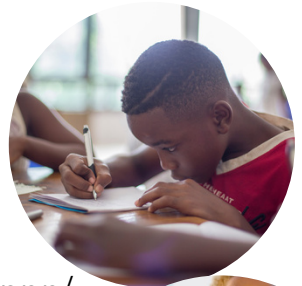
Evidence-based Prevention Programs

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:

- Dating Matters: www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/datingmatters/index.html
- Green Dot: www.green dot.org
- Big Brothers, Big Sisters: www.bbbs.org
- Family Resource Center of Northeast Georgia / Prevent Child Abuse Habersham: <https://frcofneg.org/>
- Forsyth County Visitation and Family Life Center (Supporting Adoption & Foster Families Together): <https://saftt.org/>
- Harmony House Child Advocacy Center- Franklin Springs: <https://harmonyhousecacsac.org/>
- White County Family Connection: <http://white.gafcp.org/>
- Ninth District Opportunity, Inc.: <http://www.ndo.org>
- Sisu Integrated Early Learning: <https://www.mysisu.org/>

Helpful Resources

- Find Help GA: <https://findhelpga.org/>
- 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/
- Peach Parenting: <https://peachparenting.org/>
- DECAL Developmental Milestones: <https://development.decal.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

REFERENCES

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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. Training. <https://abuse.publichealth.gsu.edu/training/>