

PREVENTING ACES - DATA FOR DECISION MAKING

DFCS Region 4: Butts, Carroll, Coweta, Fayette, Heard, Henry, Lamar, Meriwether, Pike, Spalding, Troup, and Upson 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. Increase life-skills training for school-aged children and youth (e.g., financial literacy as a core competency).
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 access to affordable childcare for parents who are working or in school, especially for lower income and hourly-wage-earning 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: Increase life-skills training for school-aged children and youth (e.g., financial literacy as a core competency).

Percent of high school students who graduated on time, by school district

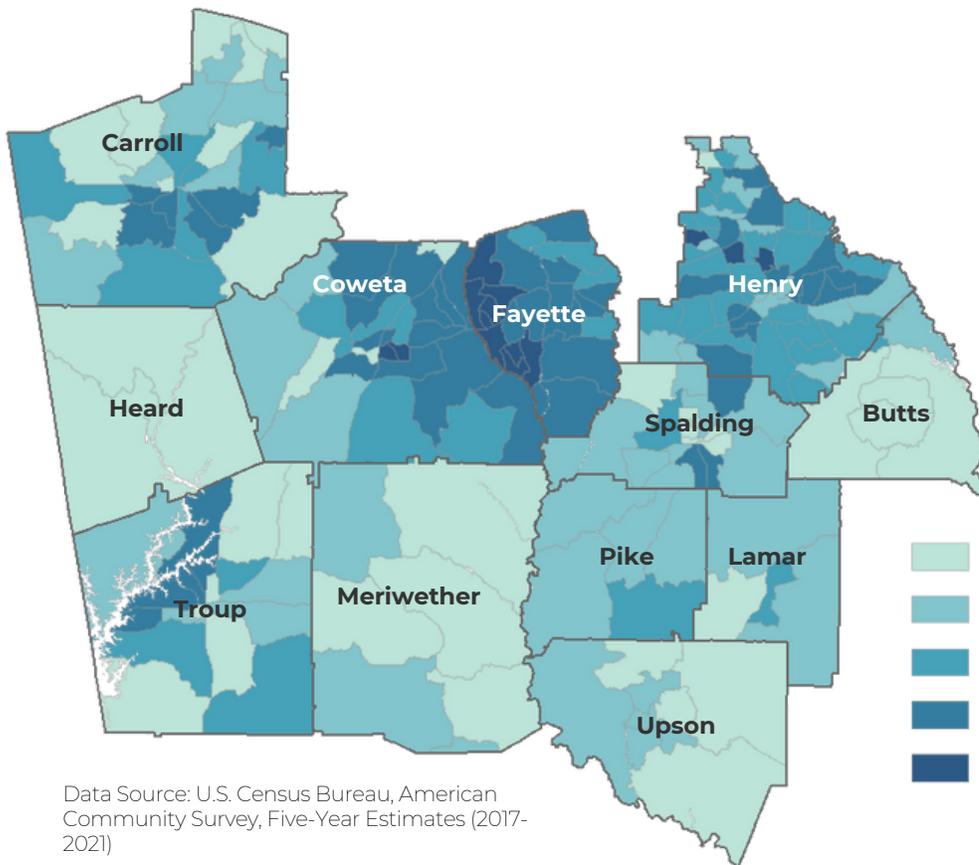
School District	Percent
Spalding County	79.5
Meriwether County	80.4
Lamar County	84.6
Troup County	85.9
Henry County	86.8
Fayette County	89.8
Coweta County	90.1
Upson County	90.2
Carrollton City	92.4
Butts County	93.1
Carroll County	94.0
Heard County	95.2
Pike County	95.5
Georgia	84.1

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

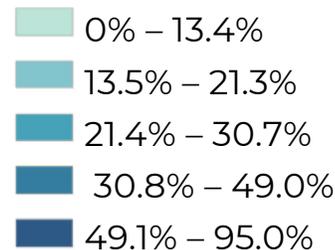
Life skills curricula with a focus on social-emotional learning (SEL) can reduce peer violence and improve reading, writing, and math proficiency (CDC, 2019).

The tables on the left shows the percent of students that graduated high school on time by school district and the percent of adults 25 and older who earned a Bachelor's degree or higher. Increasing life-skills training (with a focus on SEL) for school-aged children and youth can further improve academic achievements, such as graduation rates and higher education which can decrease the likelihood of ACEs (CDC 2019, 2021).

Percent of population 25 years and over whose highest education completed is bachelor's degree or higher, by census tract (map) and county (table)



County	Percent
Heard	10.5
Meriwether	11.8
Butts	12.2
Upson	14.6
Lamar	18.2
Spalding	18.6
Troup	19.7
Pike	20.4
Carroll	21.5
Henry	28.2
Coweta	33.7
Fayette	46.2
Georgia	33.0

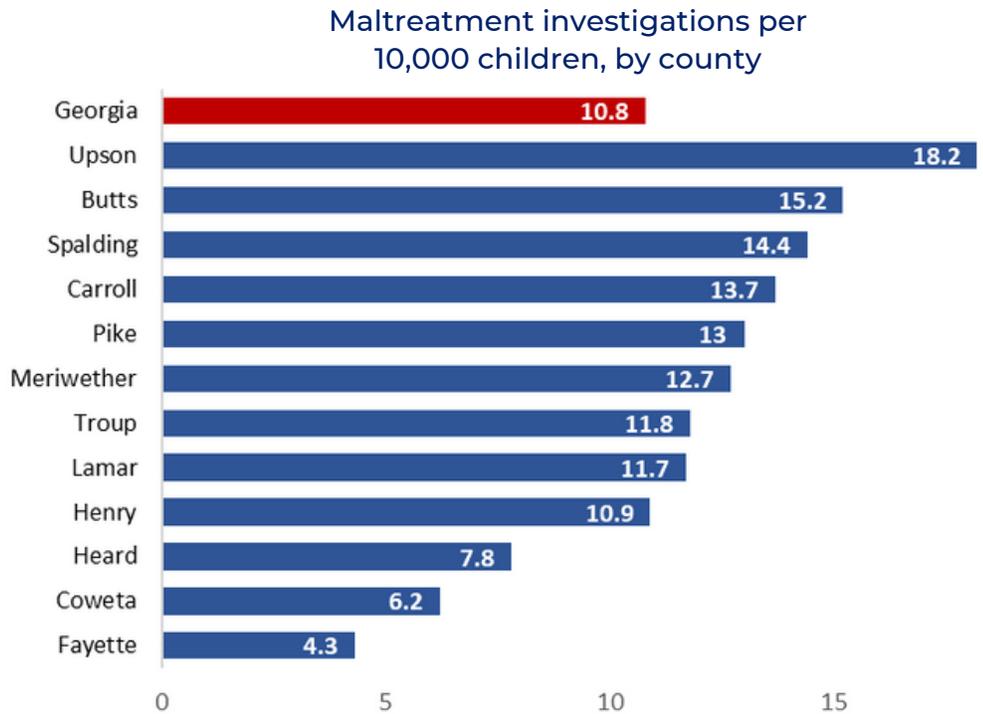


Data Source: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, Five-Year Estimates (2017-2021)

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 in from June 2021 to May 2022. While the numbers vary from 4.3 to 18.2 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](#).



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

Trauma can impact a child's ability to concentrate and succeed in school. Further, strict disciplinary actions in schools can themselves be re-traumatizing for students with existing trauma or ACEs (SAMSHA 2014). Trauma-informed training increases school personnel's compassion for students and understanding of their behavior and improves their ability to meet students' academic and emotional needs.

Students in this region felt **respected by adults** in their school, with over 90% of students in most school districts reporting they feel that adults in their school treat all students with respect.



Percent of 6th-12th grade students who reported that adults in their school treat all students with respect, by school district

School District	Percent
Upson County	87.6
Meriwether County	87.7
Henry County	88.5
Troup County	89.5
Lamar County	89.7
Spalding County	90.1
Butts County	91.1
Coweta County	92.2
Carrollton City	92.3
Fayette County	92.6
Pike County	92.6
Carroll County	93.1
Heard County	96.0
Georgia	90.8

Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

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 4, students reported feeling highly connected to others at school; in all school districts, over 90% of 6th-12th grade students reported they feel connected to others at school.



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, and substance use** are behaviors that are strongly associated with ACEs such as experiencing abuse or neglect.

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 experience (PCA GA).

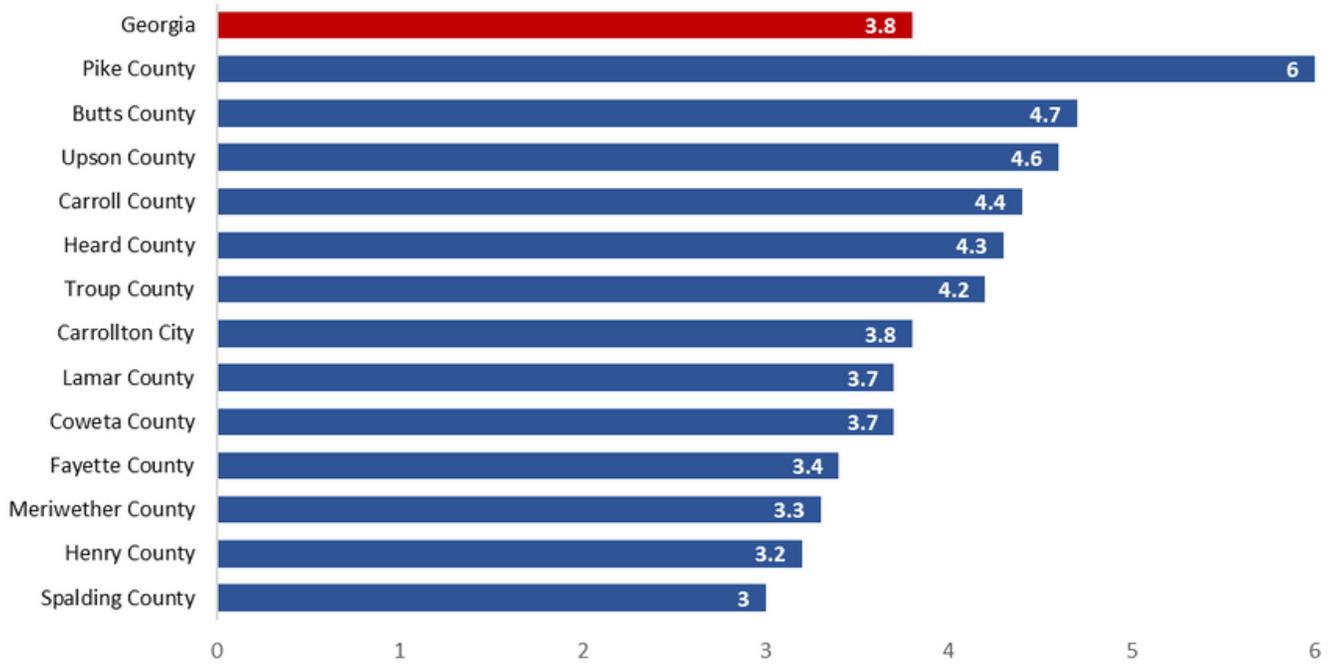
In Region 4, bullying was common, with more than 1 in 5 students reporting having been bullied or threatened at school in several districts. Having had 5 or more alcoholic drinks in a row (within a couple of hours) in the past 30 days was strongly associated with other behaviors involving the use of drugs and alcohol. Some districts in this region had rates of binge drinking far above the state average.

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

School District	Percent
Meriwether County	90.1
Upson County	90.1
Spalding County	90.3
Henry County	91.1
Butts County	92.0
Troup County	92.2
Lamar County	92.9
Coweta County	93.3
Pike County	93.3
Carroll County	93.7
Carrollton City	94.5
Fayette County	94.7
Heard County	96.0
Georgia	92.7

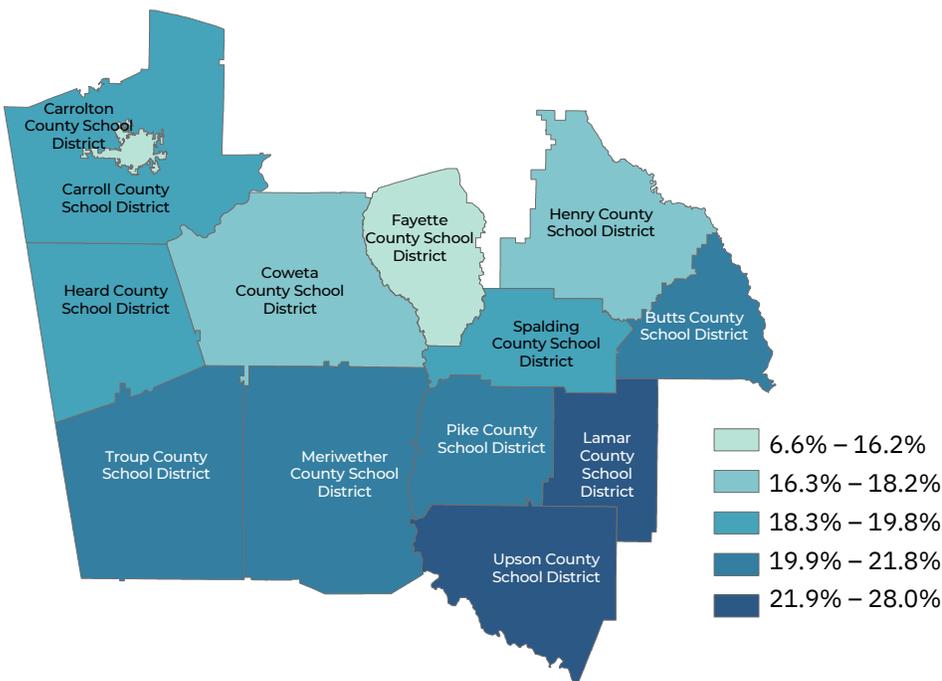
Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

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



Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020).

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



School District	Percent
Fayette County	13.8
Carrollton City	15.8
Henry County	16.5
Coweta County	16.8
Carroll County	18.6
Spalding County	19.4
Heard County	19.8
Butts County	20.3
Meriwether County	20.3
Pike County	21.1
Troup County	21.8
Lamar County	22.2
Upson County	22.5
Georgia	17.3

Data Source: Georgia Student Health Survey (2020)

Strategy 3: Expand access to affordable childcare for parents who are working or in school, especially for lower income and hourly-wage-earning families.

Poverty and economic instability create high stress environments and conditions that put children at risk of experiencing ACEs and can lead to toxic stress that may negatively impact cognitive processes and harm the nervous and immune systems. Access to affordable childcare reduces parental stress and maternal depression, and can prevent ACEs by increasing economic stability and family income, increasing maternal employment, and improving parents' ability to meet children's basic needs (CDC 2019).

Children in poverty varies widely in this region. While the rate of child poverty in Fayette county is among the lowest in the state, many counties in this region have more than one in four children in families that live below the poverty level.

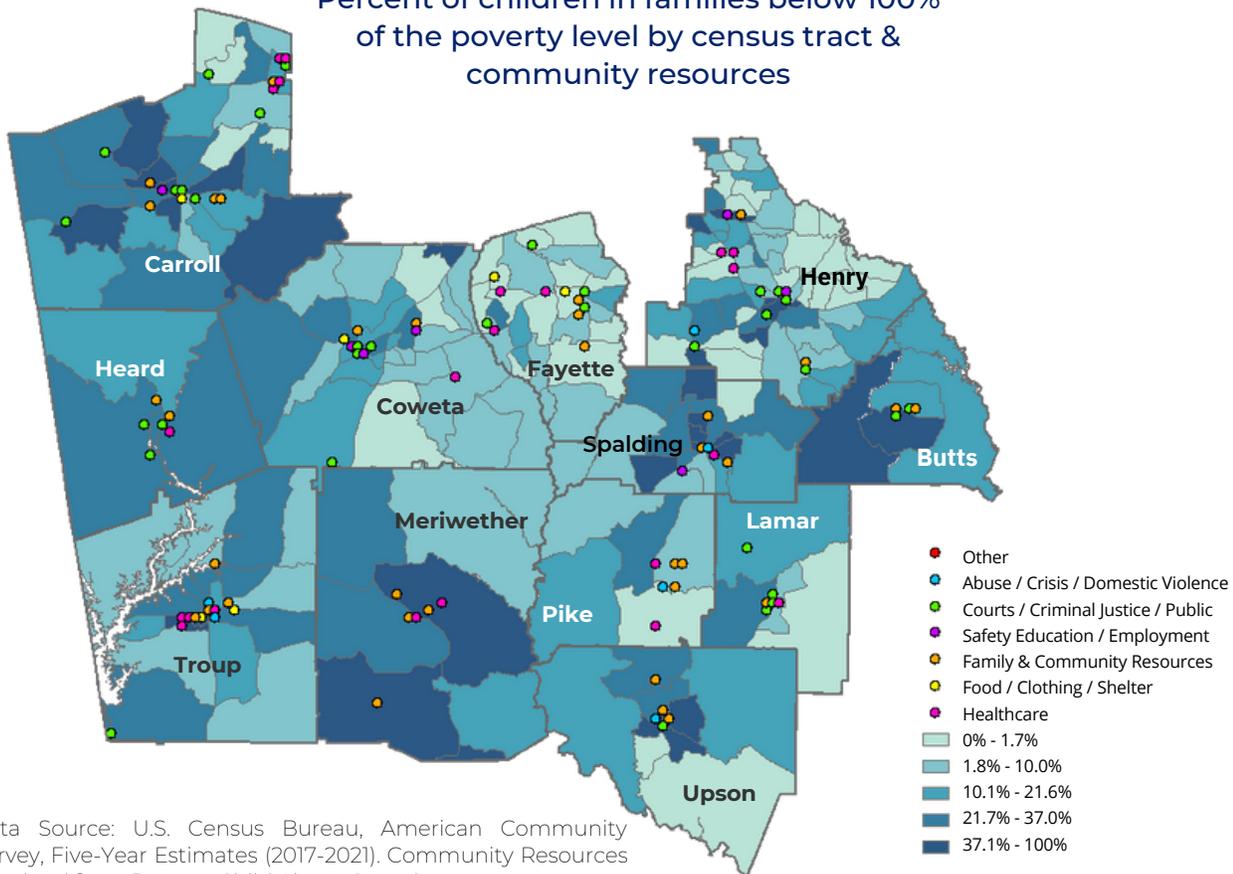
Providing family supports, including affordable childcare, can prevent the occurrence of ACEs. The dots on the map below show the locations of community resources in the region.

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

County	Percent
Fayette	5.5
Pike	8.3
Coweta	10.7
Henry	13.3
Lamar	14.4
Troup	23.1
Carroll	24.2
Spalding	25.3
Heard	25.5
Upson	30.7
Meriwether	30.8
Butts	35.4
Georgia	19.6

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 (2017-2021). Community Resources Obtained from Prevent Child Abuse Georgia

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
- **McIntosh Trail Early Childhood Development Council Inc. (Butts, Henry and Upson):** <http://mtecdc.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.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

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>

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

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.