



Adverse Childhood Experiences in Alaska

What are ACEs?

ACEs are “adverse childhood experiences” that impair development of children’s brains and bodies so profoundly that the effects persist throughout a person’s life and are passed on to the next generation. ACEs cause much of chronic disease, and most mental illness, and are at the root of much of our society’s violence.

While exposure to some adversity during childhood is normal and necessary for healthy development, sustained or repeated exposure to severe adversity without supportive relationships is toxic for children. Developing resilience—strength to care for one’s self, find healthy support, and recover from challenge—can buffer children from the impact of ACEs.



**2 out of 3
Alaskan adults
have an ACE score
of 1 or more¹**

What are the types of ACEs?

ACEs are adversities that affect children, communities, and culture. Most surveys of ACEs in Alaska measure 10 types of adverse experience. Each experience counts as 1, no matter how often it occurred, and the total number of different adverse experiences is a person’s ACE score. The higher the score, the more likely a person will experience chronic health and well-being issues.

Many researchers now track other types of adversity such as bullying and extreme poverty too. Adversities experienced by communities and culture – like the ‘64 earthquake, suicide, and historical trauma – can also negatively impact children.

Types of ACEs

Household & Community Dysfunction

- › Household member with mental illness
- › Incarcerated household member
- › Bullying and discrimination
- › Divorced or separated parents
- › Mother treated violently
- › Poverty and financial insecurity
- › Household member addicted to substances
- › Traumatic community events such as suicide and historical trauma

Child Abuse & Neglect

- › Physical Neglect/Emotional Neglect
- › Physical abuse
- › Sexual abuse
- › Verbal / emotional abuse

How do ACEs affect the people of Alaska?

Three ways.

- 1.** ACEs cause a toxic level of stress that, unlike manageable stress, disrupts normal brain development and can lead to life-long social, emotional, and cognitive impairment.
- 2.** ACEs also strain and weaken children's organ systems, which causes long-term health problems. Children often turn to high risk behaviors to cope with the pain of ACEs and those can also lead to chronic illness and disease.
- 3.** Finally, the effects of ACEs may embed in a child's DNA and re-emerge in the next generation when he/she grows up and has children.

A person with 4 or more ACEs is:

- 12x** → more likely to attempt suicide²
- 10x** → as likely to use injection drugs²
- 7x** → as likely to be an alcoholic²
- 3x** → more likely to be unable to work and twice as likely to earn less than \$20,000 annually³
- 2x** → as likely to drop out of high school³
- 2x** → as likely to have heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes²

Alaskans with 6+ ACEs die up to 20 years younger, than Alaskans with 0 ACEs³

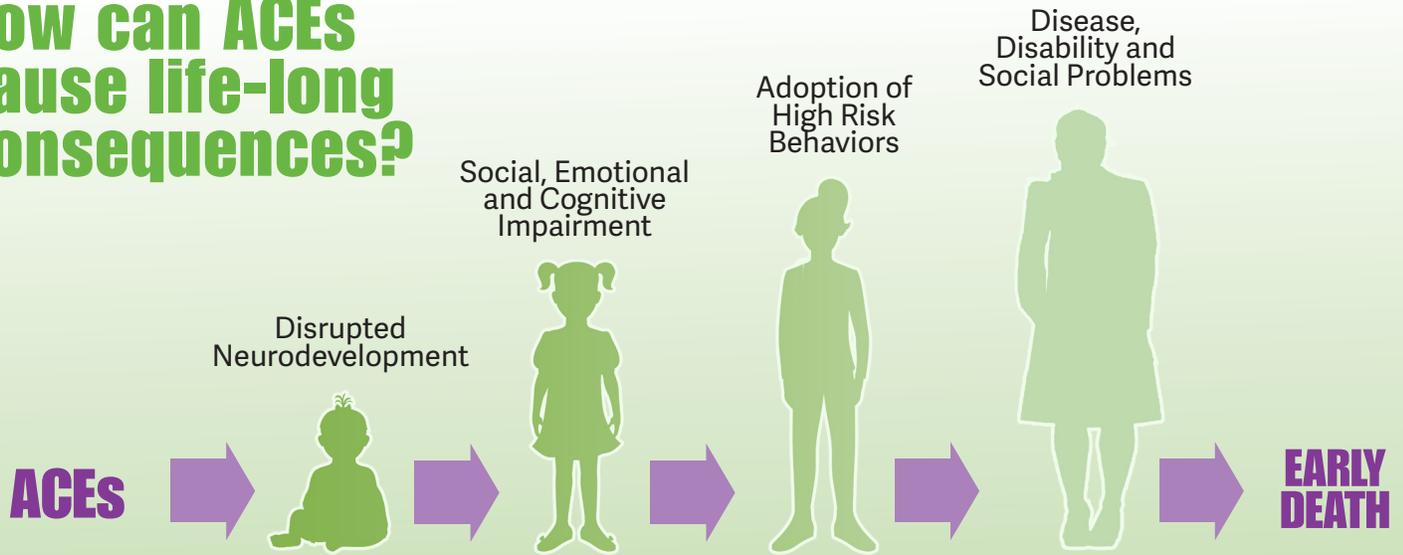


STANDARD LIFE EXPECTANCY



LIFE EXPECTANCY 6 ACEs +

How can ACEs cause life-long consequences?



When families and communities take steps to build resilience and supportive relationships, the life-long consequences of ACEs can be prevented and healed.

How do we stop ACEs?

Two ways.

1

Reduce children's exposure to trauma and severe or sustained adversity.

2

Adopt practices that build children's resilience through supportive relationships.



Working together, we can prevent adversity and build resilience.

TAKE ACTION!

1 Learn more about ACEs and resilience.

- › ACEs Too High www.cestoohigh.com
- › The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study www.cestudy.org
- › Center on the Developing Child www.developingchild.harvard.edu/resources
- › Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ace
- › Family Policy Council www.fpc.wa.gov
- › National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families www.zerotothree.org
- › Resilience Trumps ACEs www.resiliencetrumpsaces.org

2 Support programs that encourage attachment and healthy relationships.

- › Parenting workshops
- › Family support groups
- › Therapeutic interventions
- › Home visiting programs

3 Promote trauma-informed workforce, schools and communities.

- › Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration www.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma-interventions
- › National Council for Behavioral Health www.thenationalcouncil.org/areas-of-expertise/trauma-informed-behavioral-healthcare

¹ *Adverse Childhood Experiences: Overcoming ACEs in Alaska*. Prepared for the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. Available at: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/abada/ace-ak/Pages/default.aspx>

² Center for Youth Wellness. *A Hidden Crisis: Findings on Adverse Childhood Experiences in California*. Available at <http://www.centerforyouthwellness.org/resources/>

³ Sidmore, P. 2013 *Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System: Adverse Childhood Experiences of Alaskan Adults Presentation*. Prepared for the Alaska Mental Health Board and the Advisory Board on Alcoholism and Drug Abuse. Available at <http://dhss.alaska.gov/abada/ace-ak/Pages/default.aspx>.

SUPPORT ALASKA'S
CHILDREN!



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