



Five Key Things to Know about Adverse Childhood Experiences

Recent research in the field of child abuse and neglect prevention focuses on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs include abuse and neglect as well as other household dysfunctions or circumstances that affect children adversely including substance abuse, parental separation or divorce, mental illness, domestic violence and criminal behavior. The childhood trauma stemming from early adversity has a profound impact on social connections, school readiness and the increased likelihood of developing negative health behaviors that can lead to disease and early death. In the February 2018 Child Trends Research Brief, 31 percent of Kansas children birth to 17-years-old had experienced one or two ACEs and 13 percent had experienced three or more. **Here are some of the effects:**



1. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- From State Fiscal Year 2010 to 2019, Kansas has seen a 30 percent increase in the number of child abuse and neglect reports; a 63 percent increase in reports screened as needing an investigation; and even with a change in definition, a 7 percent increase rate of substantiations.
- Non-fatal child maltreatment has an average lifetime cost of \$830,928 per victim, according to the Centers for Disease Control (2018), including health care costs and costs incurred in the child welfare, criminal justice and special education systems.
- In Kansas, the average cost of out-of-home placement was \$27,000 per child, per year in 2019 compared to an average \$8,000 for intensive home visitation services.



2. IMPACT ON EDUCATION

- In a Washington State University study of elementary children, those with three or more ACEs were three times more likely for academic failure; five times more likely to have severe attendance problems; six times more likely to have severe school behavior concerns; and four times more likely for frequent reported poor health (Blodgett, 2018).
- Higher cumulative ACE scores increase the risk for poor educational and employment outcomes (Bellis et al., 2013).



3. IMPACT ON HEALTH

- There is a direct and significant relationship between the number of ACEs and increases in social, emotional and cognitive impairments, disease, injury, disability and health-risk behaviors.
- High ACE scores have been linked to a number of sexually risky behaviors such as having 50 or more sexual partners, intercourse before age 15 and becoming pregnant as a teenager (Anda et al., 2010; Hillis et al., 2004).
- Higher cumulative ACE scores have been shown to increase the odds of smoking, heavy drinking, incarceration and morbid obesity (Bellis et al., 2013).
- Higher ACE scores increase significantly the odds of developing some of the leading causes of death in adulthood, such as heart disease, cancer, chronic lung disease, skeletal fractures and liver disease (Felitti et al., 1998).



4. IMPACT ON JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CORRECTIONS

- Research on ACEs have revealed higher prevalence rates of adversity and trauma for justice-involved youth compared to youth in the general population (Dierkhising et al., 2013).



5. IMPACT ON THE ECONOMY

- Children who are successful in their early years will be better able to achieve higher educational achievement and enter the job market as tax-paying citizens.
- For every \$1 invested in early childhood development programs, there is a \$7 return.

Although ACEs are damaging, science also shows that providing stable, responsive, nurturing relationships in the earliest years of life can prevent or even reverse the damaging effects of early life stress with lifelong benefits for learning, behavior and health. You can help Kansas families and children do better by supporting evidence-based programs that strengthen families and provide a foundation for healthy child development at home.