

CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

A Focus on Resilience and Well-Being

- » **Resilience** describes a child's ability to do well, despite experiencing adversity
- » In 2018, an estimated **40%** of U.S. children (0-17) experienced at least one adverse childhood experience (ACE)¹
- » Early experiences of ACEs and toxic stress can have impacts in childhood, adolescence, and beyond
- » Youth who experience early childhood adversity are disproportionately represented in the justice system, where more than **50%** have experienced **4 or more** ACEs
- » An estimated **45%** of childhood mental health conditions may be related to childhood adversity

Resilience, which can be built, helps children mitigate or lessen these negative impacts

"Promotive factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or the larger society that actively enhance well-being."²

"Protective factors are conditions or attributes of individuals, families, communities or the larger society that mitigate or eliminate risk."³



Family, community, and internal abilities can serve as protective factors for children that help them build resiliency.

Significant contributors to building resilience include healthy connections and relationships to supportive adults.⁴

WHAT CAN WE DO?

INCREASE EDUCATION & AWARENESS

- ...about research-based frameworks and approaches that enhance community, family, and child health, well-being, and development.

FOCUS ON WELL-BEING

- ...through use of an ecological perspective, including community, school, family, and individual levels, to promote resilience among children. Children reap the benefits of healthy communities and healthy families.
- ...by setting a good example and focusing on personal self-care and wellness practices, habits, and rituals.

IMPLEMENT A TRAUMA-INFORMED APPROACH

- ...to prevent adverse events from occurring in the first place, to engage in early identification of children who have experienced ACEs, and to promote healthy childhood development that can decrease the negative impact of ACEs.⁵
- ...that considers the level of individual and community needs for prevention, intervention, and healing practices related to community trauma.

SUPPORT PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

- ...with developing the skills and having the resources they need to engage in happy, healthy relationships with their children. Parents and caregivers may benefit from learning parenting behaviors that can more successfully promote happy and healthy relationships with their children. The lack of positive parenting behaviors does not inherently mean that a parent or caregiver is doing anything wrong. There are a myriad of reasons why parents may need support in developing their skills and capacities.
- ...by advocating for policies that support families and promote equitable communities.

ENGAGE IN SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING (SEL)

- ...to build and support the development of many of the same internal abilities that are associated with resilience, like self-awareness and responsible decision-making⁶ SEL strategies can be used both inside and outside of school settings.

TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH!

- ...in all settings. Mental health is public health. Mental health promotion, for children, youth, and adults, in all settings can help raise awareness and understanding of trauma exposure, ACEs, healing, resilience, and well-being.
- ...in public health conversations. Public health and population health dialogue related to social determinants of health, which impact children and their families, can include explicit conversation about mental health, adverse childhood experiences, and adverse community experiences.

Endnotes

1. Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative. (2018). National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH) data query. Data Resource Center for Child and Adolescent Health supported by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB). Retrieved from www.childhealthdata.org. In this 2018 survey, children were found to experience at least one of nine ACEs: "hard to cover basics on family's income (ACE1); parent or guardian divorced or separated (ACE3); parent or guardian died (ACE4); parent or guardian served time in jail (ACE5); saw or heard parents or adults slap, hit, kick punch one another in the home (ACE6); was a victim of violence or witnessed violence in neighborhood (ACE7); lived with anyone who was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed (ACE8); lived with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs (ACE9); and treated or judged unfairly due to race/ethnicity (ACE 10)"
2. Center for the Study of Social Policy. (2018). Parental resilience: Protective and promotive factors [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <https://cssp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ProtectiveFactorsActionSheets.pdf>
3. Ibid.
4. Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. (n.d). InBrief: Resilience series. Retrieved from <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-resilience-series/>
5. Lang, J., Campbell, K., Vanderploeg, J. (2015). Advancing Trauma-Informed Systems for Children. Farmington, CT: Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut. Retrieved from <https://www.chdi.org/index.php/publications/reports/impact-reports/advancing-trauma-informed-systems-children>
6. Weir, K. (2017, September). Maximizing children's resilience. *Monitor on Psychology*, 48(8). Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2017/09/cover-resilience>