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DHSS Policy on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and childhood brain development

The 30th Legislature passed SB 105; which among other health care policies included statutory language updating the state policy related to children found in AS 47.05.060.

The Department of Health and Social Services, through the language in SB 105, has developed a policy statement to acknowledge and take into account the principles of early childhood and youth brain development. The policy statement ensures DHSS will act in a trauma-informed manner.

As DHSS provides broad-based safety nets; it is critical that all employees understand the impacts of trauma, but also recognize that the services our department provides can help mitigate factors related to ACEs.

Policy

Overview of 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. Studies have shown that ACEs can have significant impacts on both physical and mental health throughout a person's life. 2 out of 3 Alaskan adults have an ACE score of 1 or more.¹

DHSS is made up of eight divisions. Many of them are well-versed in ACEs and are trauma informed in their day-to-day activities. The Overview of Programs tab goes into more detail on what each division has implemented.

Watch this video: ACE's Primer featuring educational media from Paper Tigers and Resilience: The Biology of Stress & the Science of Hope:



04:59

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>*

Health and Social Services

Office of the Commissioner
Alaska Pioneer Homes
Alaska Psychiatric Institute
Behavioral Health
Finance and Management Services
Health Care Services
Juvenile Justice
Office of Children's Services
Public Assistance
Public Health
Senior and Disabilities Services

Related Links

Addressing Gaps in the Crisis Psychiatric Response System (pdf)
Alaska Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)
Programs
Resources
Training
Alaska's Comprehensive Integrated Mental Health Plan
Alaska Early Childhood Coordinating Council (AECCC)
Health Emergency Response Operations (HERO)
Medicaid State Plan
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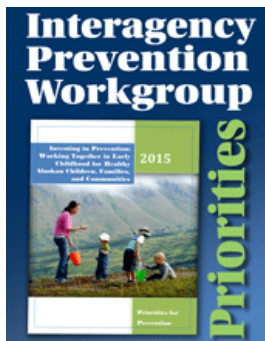

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News and Events

New regional ACEs data available. Click graphic below:



[>> Archives](#)



Adverse Childhood Experiences in Alaska

"Adverse Childhood Experiences" (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic experiences, including abuse, neglect, witnessing domestic violence, or growing up with substance abuse, mental illness, or a parent in jail.

Childhood trauma may lead to serious health problems that last into adulthood and even future generations, researchers have found. The cause: Children's stress hormones can reach toxic levels that interfere with their brain development. **It doesn't have to be this way.**

The good news is that people can recover. Preventing ACEs and building resilience in Alaskans who have experienced them has the potential to pay enormous dividends, from less use of state health and social services to increasing the competitiveness of Alaska's work force.

Communities and agencies statewide are already using ACE research. Homer teens lead sessions on building resilience, and schools from Kotzebue to Juneau use the finding to better understand students' behavior and support student achievement. Doctors are screening for ACEs and incorporating that knowledge into their health care recommendations. Juvenile justice professionals have become trauma-informed. From public safety to public health to corporate Alaska - ACEs matter - and more Alaskans are becoming informed.

For more information about ACEs and ways to prevent them, see this report **"Adverse Childhood Experiences - Overcoming ACEs in Alaska."** The report summarizes medical research and compares Alaska with other states. The report also discusses social and economic impacts, and strategies to reduce harm. For more detail, see an [overview of ACEs in Alaska](#) with data from the 2013 Alaska Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System.

The ACE Study is an ongoing research collaboration between U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Kaiser Permanente, based on an initial groundbreaking study between 1995-1997.

> [Detailed Results of the Alaska ACE Study \(pdf\), \(pptx\)](#)

Click graphic below to view the YouTube video, ***Saving Brains, A Grand Challenge***, produced by Dr. Mike Evans. (9:12 mins.)

[Saving Brains, A Grand Challenge](#)

Related Links

[The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study](#)

[CDC-Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

[SAMSHA](#)

[Office for Victims of Crime](#)

Resources

[Self-Regulation and Co-Regulation Resources](#)

- > [OPRE Duke-Self-regulation](#)
- > [OPRE Duke-Co-regulation](#)
- > [Slide Presentation](#)

[Extensive Information about Alaskan Children's ACEs](#)

[Updated Alaskan ACEs Handouts](#)

[Economic Costs of ACEs in Alaska](#)

[Epigenetics](#)

[Strengthening Families](#)

[Protecting the Childhood Brain](#)

[Alaskan Protective Factors \(pptx\) \(pdf\)](#)

[ANTHC Healthy Families Resources](#)

Frequently asked Questions (FAQs)