

ACEs and Trauma

Informed Care for Foster/Adoptive Parents

What are ACEs?

- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are behaviors that a child experiences as hurtful, threatening, or violent before the age of 18 years (Finkelhor, 2020).
- These can be abuse, neglect, or some complicated home situations like one or both parents being an alcoholic or partners using violence at home.



SCREENING TOOL

The ACE Questionnaire is a brief tool developed to identify the total number of ACEs a particular individual experienced in childhood. It consists of 10 questions that cover three primary concepts: emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.

- <https://www.fosterfunderfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/ACE-Questionnaire.pdf>



Types of ACEs

- Emotional, physical, and sexual abuse
- Emotional and physical neglect
- Family disruptions (alcohol and other drug use, parental divorce, living with violence)



IMPACT ON MENTAL HEALTH

- Children exposed to ACEs are at higher risk for mental illness (anxiety, depression, PTSD) (Bomysoad & Francis, 2020).
- ACEs impact emotional development and can persist into adulthood, influencing substance use and suicidal behavior (Vig et al., 2020).
- ACEs can lead to emotional issues like self-destructiveness, aggression, and social isolation.



TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE STRATEGIES FOR FOSTER/ADOPTIVE PARENTS

- Build emotional safety to ensure the child feels secure and understands their needs are important (Bomysoad & Francis, 2020).
- Use positive reinforcement to encourage good behavior and shape the child's self-image (Lotty et al., 2021).
- Coordinate with mental health workers to identify emotional challenges children face.



IMPACT ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

- ACEs are linked to chronic physical health issues like heart disease, high blood pressure, and diabetes (Vig et al., 2020).
- ACEs affect the body's stress response system and immune system, increasing vulnerability to illnesses.
- ACEs raise the risk of developing long-term diseases in adulthood (Vig et al., 2020).



REFERENCES

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