

Adverse Childhood Experiences

Health Equity Council

Executive statement

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are rooted in systemic issues and inequities. Preventing and reducing ACEs requires addressing the roots.

Background

ACEs are potentially traumatic events in childhood (0-17 years). They can leave lasting, negative impacts on health and well-being. Adverse experiences include but are not limited to: violence, abuse, neglect, witnessing violence, and other aspects of the environment that can undermine the sense of safety, stability and bonding. The toxic stress from these experiences affect development and can result in adverse health conditions. ACEs are associated with negative health risk behaviors and outcomes, chronic health problems, heart disease, suicide, mental illness, substance misuse, and violence. Children with ACEs also struggle with decision-making, forming healthy relationships, education, finances and work history.

ACEs are preventable and its effects are reversible. Preventing ACEs can reduce long-term health conditions as well as social and economic costs to individuals, families, and communities.

ACEs are rooted in Adverse Community Environments such as poverty, violence, discrimination, economic instability, community disruption, and lack of access to quality housing and food. A public health response requires reversing symptoms as well as addressing root causes to provide children an environment where they can thrive.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Economic Stability for Families

Prioritize policies and programs that ensure economic stability for all families.

Recommendation 2: Early Childhood

Prioritize and invest in early childhood development and programs, such as early childhood home visitation, universal child care, and universal pre-K.

Recommendation 3: Stress Resilience

Develop skill development programs to help parents, youth and children handle stress, manage emotions, and tackle everyday challenges.

Recommendation 4: Social Connectedness

Develop programming that promotes positive, healthy relationships between youth and adults.

Recommendation 5: Awareness and Capacity

Provide trainings to city departments, employees, and policy makers on awareness and understanding of the role of social determinants of health on ACEs and public health approaches to preventing, identifying, and responding to ACEs.

Recommendation 6: Parental Help-Seeking

Develop interventions for families to receive help with parenting challenges, and promote such interventions through anti-stigma programs.