

ACEs and Trauma

Informed Care for Foster/Adoptive Parents

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.

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



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.



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

- Lotty, M., Bantry-White, E., & Dunn-Galvin, A. (2021). Trauma-informed care psychoeducational group-based interventions for foster carers and adoptive parents: A narrative review. *Adoption & Fostering*, 45(2), 191-214. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03085759211012492>
- Finkelhor, D. (2020). Trends in adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in the United States. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 108, 104641.
- Vig, K. D., Paluszek, M. M., & Asmundson, G. J. (2020). ACEs and physical health outcomes. In *Adverse Childhood Experiences* (pp. 71-90). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-816065-7.00005-7>