

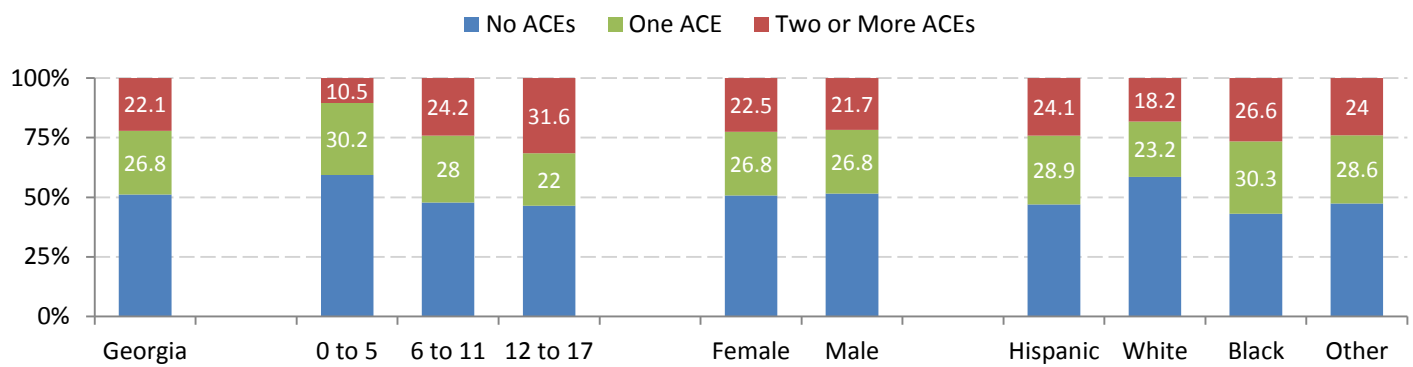


Trauma is another way of referring to a person’s emotional and physiological responses to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), such as:

- Being threatened or held captive
- Caregiver mental illness
- Chronic neglect
- Exposure to parental separation
- Exposure to violence
- Family economic hardship
- Parental alcohol or drug use
- Sexual or Physical abuse or assault
- Removal from home
- Witness to injury or murder

Research shows that ACEs can affect a child’s perception of their environment, perception of their role in their environment, and brain development.

Prevalence of ACEs in Georgia’s Children



Responses to Trauma

Positive Stress Response	Tolerable Stress Response	Toxic Stress Response
Characterized by brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in hormone levels – normal and essential to development	Activates body’s alert systems to a greater degree and is the result of more severe, longer-lasting difficulties	Occurs when a child experiences strong, frequent, and prolonged adversity

The Impact of Trauma

Children with ACEs are at increased risk of negative outcomes in multiple areas of their lives

Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use (alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs) • Risk-taking behaviors (sexual promiscuity, gang membership, and violent crime) • Economic Hardship (unemployment, poverty, and homelessness)
Behavioral Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental illness and behavioral health challenges • Psychiatric disorders
Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decreased concentration (attention, organization, and activity levels) • Decreased memory • Decreased language ability

Policy Solutions

The following recommendations address childhood stress from a variety of points. In order to adequately tackle childhood trauma, policies must focus on a child's developmental needs from birth. In addition, an adequate support system for each child should be at the center of any child policy platform.

Furthermore, policies should focus on community-based services, including programs that work to eliminate the underlying causes of childhood trauma, such as efforts made to reduce domestic and neighborhood violence, substance abuse, and poverty. Cohesive policies that attack childhood trauma from several different angles, all the while fostering a supportive environment for children, will see the most success in reducing both its individual and societal costs.

For more policy recommendations under each category please see the full report at the link below.

Early Care and Learning

- Counter childhood trauma by creating an environment where the effects of toxic stress are buffered with appropriate supports helping children adapt and enhancing child cognitive and social development.

Early Intervention

- Increased access to health care and home visiting support helps to prevent threats to healthy development and also provides early diagnoses, appropriate care, and intervention when problems emerge.

Parental Health

- Addressing parental mental and behavioral health can prevent or minimize a child's exposure to traumatic environments.

Afterschool Programs

- Increase funding and prevalence for quality after-school programs like the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs.

Foster Youth Care

- DFCS and CMOs should develop procedures that enable continuity of behavioral health and primary care while youth are in foster care and after their transitioning out of the system.

Juvenile Justice and School Discipline

- Juvenile courts must work to provide environments that are safe and services that do not increase the level of trauma that youth and families experience.

Workforce and Systems Development

- Caregivers and child-serving professionals should receive training on the effects of trauma and stress on children and youth, so that they can respond appropriately to behaviors and initiate effective interventions.

Nutrition

- Increased funding for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).