Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), or early negative experiences, can lead to negative impacts later in life, such as **poor mental and physical health, lower academic achievements, and substance abuse**. In the research discussed here, ACEs refer to these experiences:

- Homelessness
- Involvement in child welfare system
- Medical trauma
- Natural disasters
- Neglect (physical/emotional)
- Discrimination (including racism and sexism)
- Community violence

ACEs, along with other negative life events, can cause high levels of stress, or toxic stress, which can also have long-term effects on a child’s development.

**IMPACT OF ACEs**

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

- Poor health, including mental health
- Substance abuse
- Depression
- Risky behavior
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Poor academic achievement
- Employment problems

**PREVALENCE OF ACEs IN GEORGIA**

Nearly **3 in 5** surveyed Georgians reported having experienced at least one ACE.

In 2016 and 2018, Georgia collected data from adults about ACEs they experienced as children. (ACEs not included in this research are experiencing neglect and having a family member attempt or die by suicide.)

In 2020, **14.3%** of Georgians surveyed reported having experienced at least four ACEs. *

* The Department of Public Health is analyzing updated data, which is expected in December 2022.

www.georgiavoices.org
These recommendations build protective factors around families. In order to adequately tackle ACEs and toxic stress, an adequate support system for each child should be at the center of any child policy platform.

**Early Care and Learning**
- Create an environment where the effects of toxic stress are buffered with appropriate supports to help children adapt and enhance cognitive and social development

**Early Intervention**
- Increase access to health care and home visiting support to promote healthy development and provide early diagnoses, appropriate care, and intervention when problems emerge

**Parental Health**
- Address parental mental and behavioral health to minimize, or even prevent a child’s exposure to traumatic environments

**Afterschool and Summer Learning Programs**
- Increase funding and prevalence for quality afterschool and summer learning programs like the Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs to increase access and ensure affordability

**Foster Youth Care**
- Maximize implementation of the federal Family First Prevention Services Act
- Develop procedures that enable continuity of behavioral health and primary care while youth are in foster care and after they're transitioning out of the system

**Juvenile Justice and School Discipline**
- Provide environments that are safe and services that do not increase the level of trauma that youth and families experience
- Train Public Safety Officers who engage with children in child development and trauma awareness

**Workforce and Systems Development**
- Train caregivers and child-serving professionals on the effects of trauma and stress on children and youth to ensure they respond appropriately to behaviors and initiate effective interventions

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

**Stable Housing**
- Improve Georgia’s renter protection laws to reduce incidents of unsafe housing and eviction (FFPSA)

Thanks to these partners for their collaboration on this factsheet:
Sources for ACEs and Childhood Stress


2 Ibid.


4 Ibid.


6 Ibid.