



National Center for HIV/AIDS, Viral Hepatitis, STD, and TB Prevention

# School Connectedness: Why It Matters and How To Increase It

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**U.S. Department of  
Health and Human Services**  
Centers for Disease  
Control and Prevention

# CDC Helps Youth Be Healthy and Successful



We envision a future where all youth in the U.S. will be equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resources for a healthy adolescence and adulthood.



# Feeling Connected to Family and School Has Long-Lasting Positive Effects Well Into Adulthood



Strong connections to  
**FAMILY** and **SCHOOL**

Can lead to decreases in

PHYSICAL  
VIOLENCE



EMOTIONAL  
DISTRESS



MULTIPLE  
SEX PARTNERS



STD  
INFECTION



RX  
MISUSE



ILLICIT  
DRUG USE



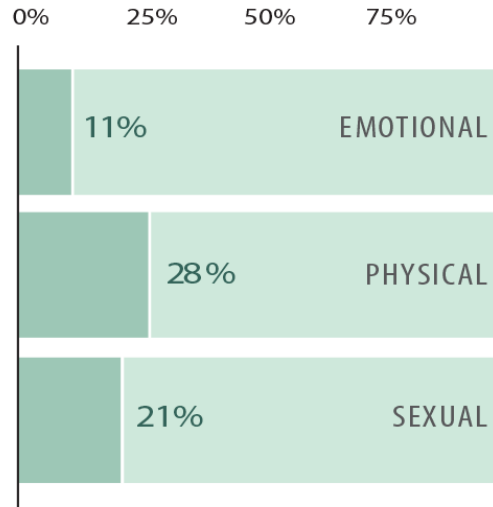


**For Many Adolescents Key  
Mental Health Indicators Were  
Moving In The Wrong Direction**

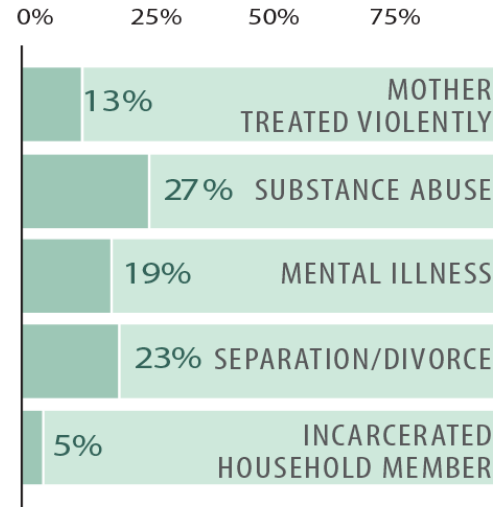
# Types of Adverse Childhood Experiences

The ACE study looked at three categories of adverse experience: **childhood abuse**, which included emotional, physical, and sexual abuse; **neglect**, including both physical and emotional neglect; and **household challenges** which included growing up in a household where there was substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of a mother or stepmother, parental separation/divorce or had a member of the household go to prison. Respondents were given an **ACE score** between 0 and 10 based on how many of these 10 types of adverse experience to which they reported being exposed.

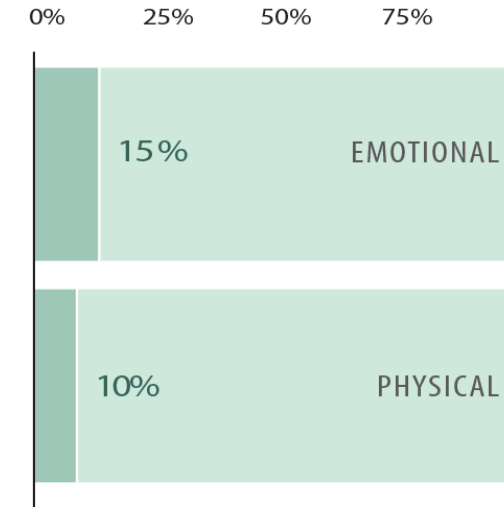
## ABUSE



## HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES



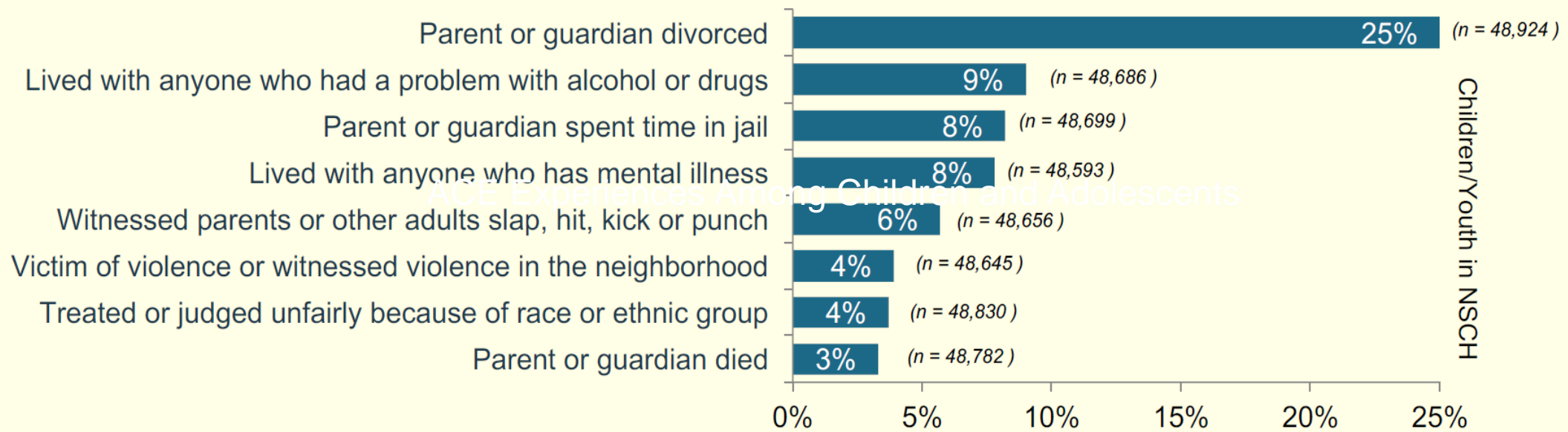
## NEGLECT



# ACE Experiences: Children and Adolescents



**Figure 1. U.S. Children and Youth Experience a Range of ACEs**



Source: 2016 National Survey of Children's Health



**SAMHSA**  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

# ACEs Can Have Lasting Effects on Behavior and Health

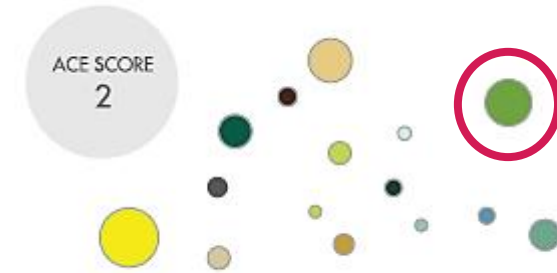
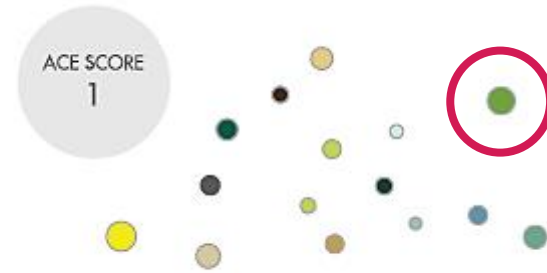


## PHYSICAL & MENTAL HEALTH

- SEVERE OBESITY
- DIABETES
- DEPRESSION
- SUICIDE ATTEMPTS
- STDs
- HEART DISEASE
- CANCER
- STROKE
- COPD
- BROKEN BONES

## BEHAVIORS

- LACK OF PHYSICAL ACTIVITY
- SMOKING
- ALCOHOLISM
- DRUG USE
- MISSED WORK






# The Percentage of Students Who Experience Poor Mental Health and Suicidality Is Increasing



THE PERCENTAGE OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS WHO:	2007 Total	2009 Total	2011 Total	2013 Total	2015 Total	2017 Total	Trend
<b>Experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness</b>	28.5	26.1	28.5	29.9	29.9	31.5	
<b>Seriously considered attempting suicide</b>	14.5	13.8	15.8	17.0	17.7	17.2	
<b>Made a suicide plan</b>	11.3	10.9	12.8	13.6	14.6	13.6	
<b>Attempted suicide</b>	6.9	6.3	7.8	8.0	8.6	7.4	
<b>Were injured in a suicide attempt</b>	2.0	1.9	2.4	2.7	2.8	2.4	

## LEGEND

-  In wrong direction
-  No change
-  In right direction

\*For the complete wording of YRBS questions, refer to Appendix.

Source: National Youth Risk Behavior Surveys, 2007-2017



# Many Adolescents Experience Multiple Risk Simultaneously



## Intersection of Risk Areas

	HRSU*	Violence Victimization	Mental Health
Violence Victimization	12.5%		
Mental Health	12.7%	23.8%	
Sexual Behavior	12.7%	18.3%	17.3%

\*HRSU-High Risk Substance Use. Use of illicit substances or misuse of prescription medications

# COVID-19 Will Likely Impact Mental Health



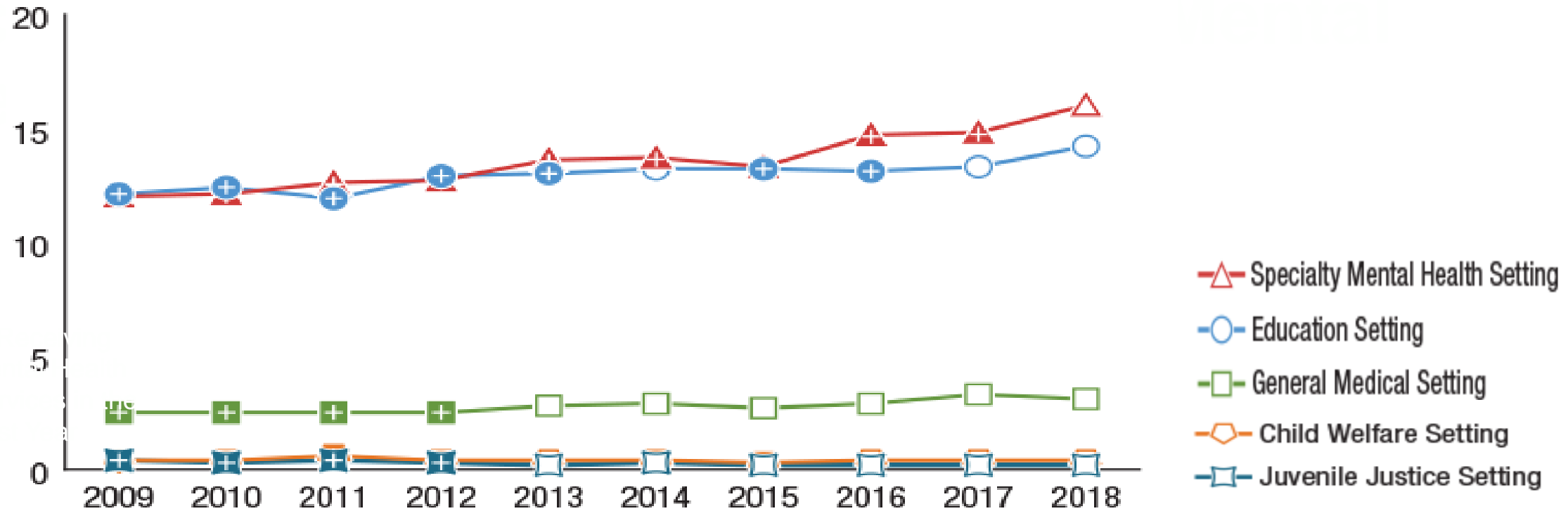
## Potential Reactions of Children and Adolescents to Social Isolation/Physical Distancing

- Worry, anxiety, fear
- Irritability
- Acting out (externalizing behaviors)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Eating and sleeping changes
- Depression
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



# Schools Play a Critical Role in Youth Mental Health

# Schools Are a Primary Provider of Mental Health Services for Youth



Source: National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2018. Available <https://www.samhsa.gov/data/sites/default/files/cbhsq-reports/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018/NSDUHNationalFindingsReport2018.pdf>

# Five Intervention Principles Following A Disaster to Promote Resiliency



1. Promote sense of safety
2. Promote calm
3. Promote sense of self- and collective-efficacy
4. **Promote connectedness**
5. Promote hope

Source: Hobfoll, S.E. Watson, P., Bell, C.C., Bryant, R.A., Brymer, M.J., Friedman, M.J., et al. (2007). Five essential elements of immediate and mid-term mass trauma intervention: Empirical evidence. *Psychiatry*, 70(4), 283-315.

# Positive Childhood Experiences Protect Adult Mental Health



Adults reporting **6-7 Positive Childhood Experiences** have **72% lower odds of having depression or poor mental health** compared to those reporting 0-2.

## Examples of Positive Childhood Experiences

1. Felt able to talk to their family about feelings
2. Felt their family stood by them during difficult times
3. Enjoyed participating in community traditions
4. **Felt a sense of belonging in high school**
5. Felt supported by friends
6. Had at least 2 nonparents adults who took genuine interest in them
7. Felt safe and protected by an adult in their home

Source: Bethell C, Jones J, Gombojav N, Linkenbach J, Sege R. Positive Childhood Experiences and Adult Mental and Relational Health in a Statewide Sample: Associations Across Adverse Childhood Experiences Levels. *JAMA Pediatr.* 2019;173(11):e193007.



# School Connectedness Is Still Vital and Can Be Virtual



- Daily check-ins with students/families
- Tie social-emotional learning skills to management of COVID-19
- Keep up school routines and rituals to the extent possible (morning announcements, spirit weeks, Mystery Readers, etc.)
- Don't forget staff well-being
- Have administrators check in on teachers

## Distance Check - In

\* Required

Name: \*

Your answer

Today I am (check all that apply)

Happy

Excited

Sad

Anxious

Hungry

Silly

Tired

Lonely

Bored

Overwhelmed

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Give a few details as to why you feel that way.

Your answer

How is your digital learning going?

Source: Association for Middle Level Learning: <http://www.amle.org/ServicesEvents/COVID-19Resources/tabid/1179/>

# Examples of Local Work Related to Trauma



- **Houston:** Held weekly mental health webinars; launched mental health hotline; training facilitators in trauma-informed practices
- **Albuquerque:** School counselors trained teachers in social-emotional lessons; established help line; providers have moved to virtual support; hosted training for staff on recognizing child abuse virtually
- **Boston:** Provided remote lesson materials on stress reduction, coping, and social-emotional learning, free telemedicine, and check-in calls for students' emotional health; offering peer-facilitated workshops on coping/supporting friends



**School-Based Primary Prevention Is Effective and Valuable (Even in a Virtual Environment)**

# Resources



- **CDC**
  - [Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
  - [How to Talk to Children About COVID 19](#)
  - [School Connectedness](#)
  - [Social Emotional Climate](#)
  - [How to Cope with Stress and Anxiety](#)
- **National Center for Child Traumatic Stress:** [https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet/outbreak\\_factsheet\\_1.pdf](https://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/resources/factsheet/outbreak_factsheet_1.pdf)
  - **Addressing Race and trauma in the Classroom: A Resource for Educators:** <https://www.nctsn.org/resources/addressing-race-and-trauma-classroom-resource-educators>
- **Crisis Counseling Assistance and Training Program (CCP):** <https://www.samhsa.gov/dtac/ccp>
- **Social Emotional Learning During COVID CASEL:** <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HdJPRm8R0LDRQ3JO9NLUvUr0E2gaGH6O/view>
- **Teacher Support:**
  - **Facing History & Ourselves:** <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/support-teachers-coronavirus-covid-19-outbreak>
  - **How Teachers Can Manage Difficult Emotions During COVID 19:** [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_teachers\\_can\\_navigate\\_difficult\\_emotions\\_during\\_school\\_closures](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_teachers_can_navigate_difficult_emotions_during_school_closures)

# For More Information



- Web: [www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth)
- Twitter: @CDC\_DASH
- E-mail: [nccddashinfo@cdc.gov](mailto:nccddashinfo@cdc.gov)
- Telephone: 1-800-CDC-INFO (1-800-232-4636)

The findings and conclusions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.



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