

# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in Kentucky

**Interim Joint Committee on Families & Children**  
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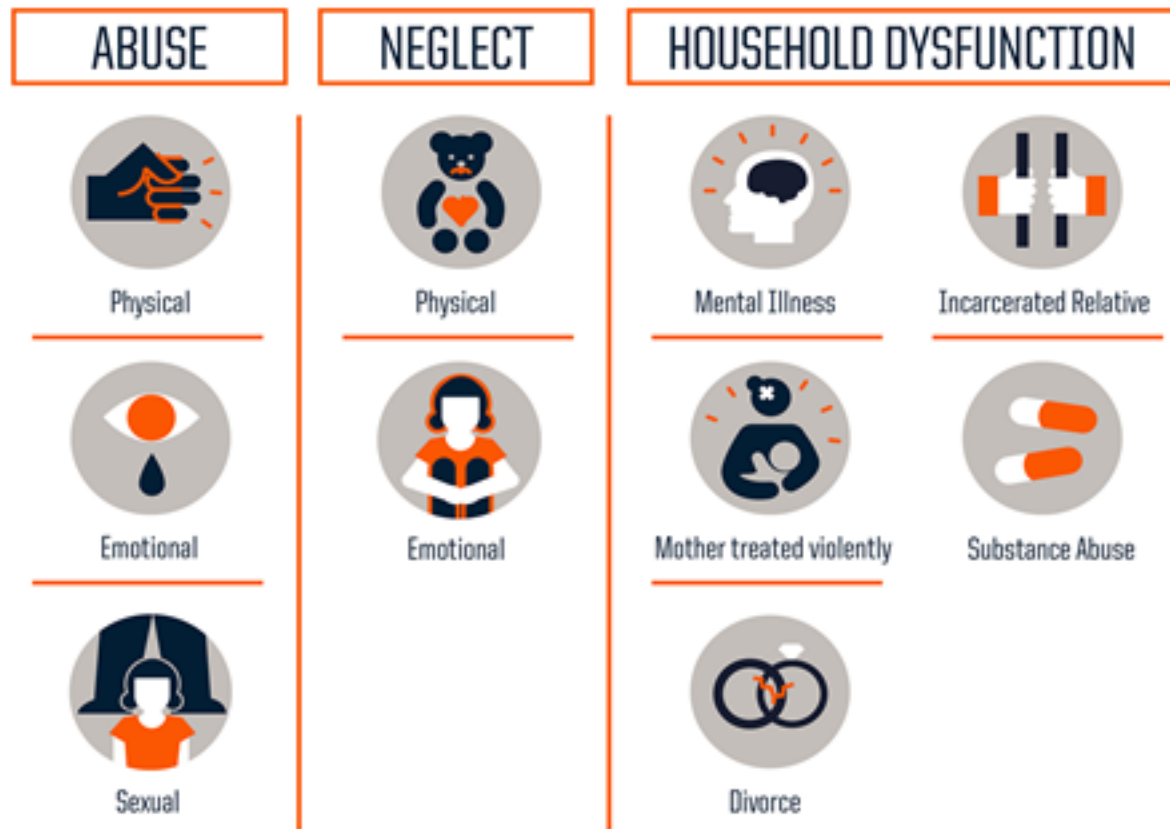
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# Defining ACEs: The Landmark ACEs Study

The study identified **adverse childhood experiences** (ACEs) and showed the relationship between negative early adversities and **significant long-term effects on physical and mental health, and overall well being.**



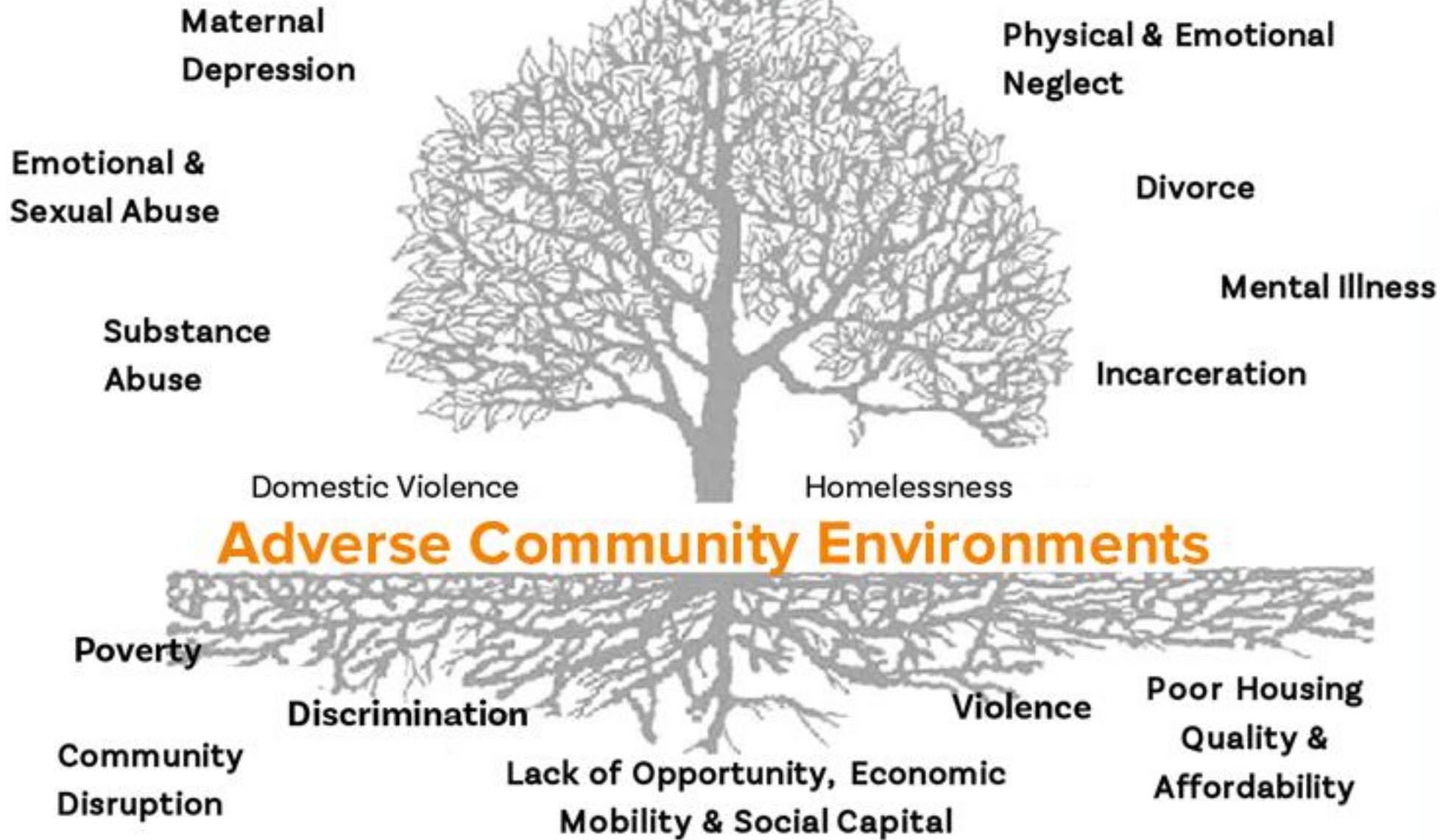
# Continued ACEs Research

- Bullying
- Community violence
- Natural disasters
- Grief and loss
- Living in foster care
- Discrimination
- Community violence
- Witnessing or experiencing acts of terrorism
- Gang membership
- Refugee or wartime experiences



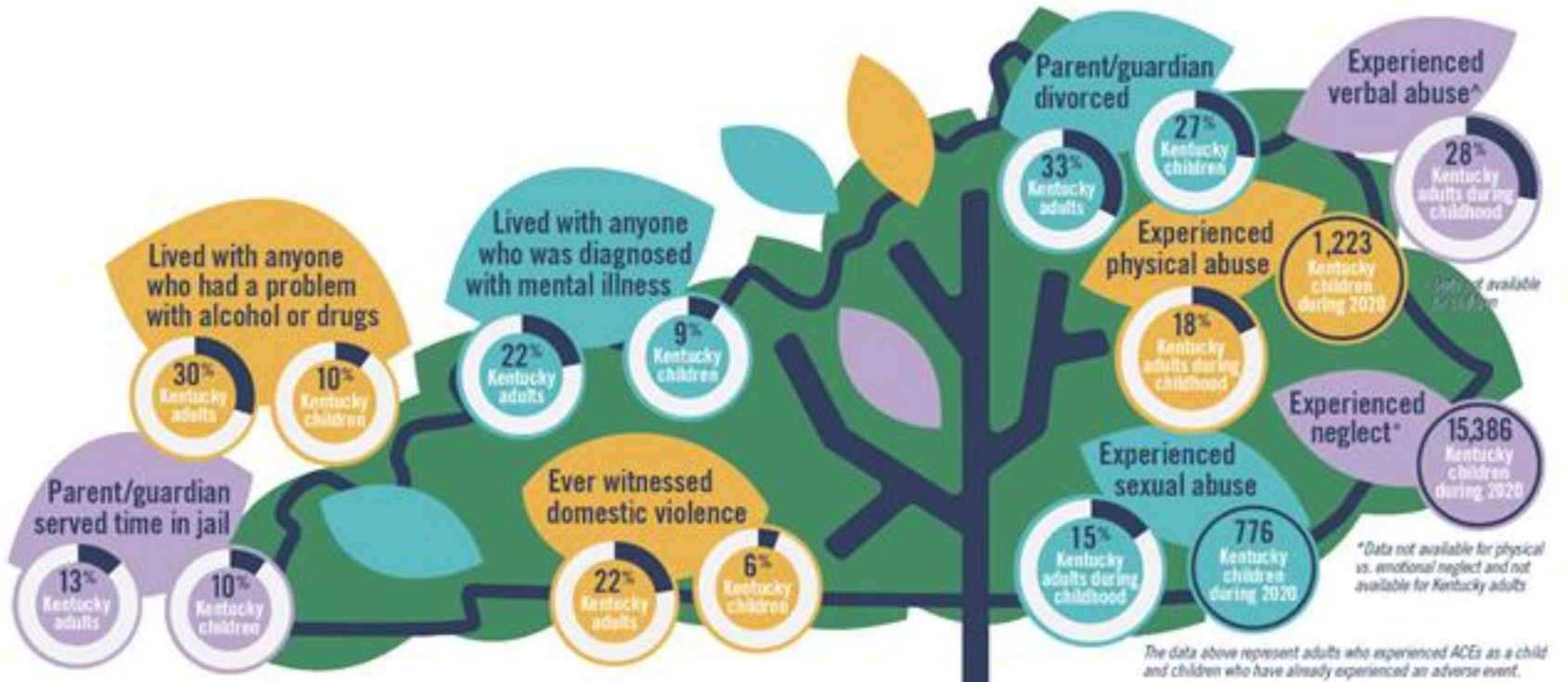
# Adverse Childhood Experiences

# The Pair of ACEs





# Kentucky's Pair of ACEs



<b>Adverse Childhood Experience</b>	<b>National</b>	<b>Kentucky</b>	<b>Rank</b>
Parent or guardian served time in jail	6.2%	12.1%	3rd
Parent or guardian who got divorced or separated	22.0%	30.00%	4th
Confirmed victims of neglect excluding medical neglect (rate per 1,000 children)	5.7%	11%	6th
Overall child victimization rate per 1,000 children	7.7%	12.3%	14th
Lived with anyone who was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed	8.3%	11.50%	14th
Lived with anyone who had a problem with alcohol or drugs	8.1%	10.4%	17th
Confirmed victims of sexual abuse (rate per 1,000 children)	0.8%	0.8%	21st
Was a victim of violence or witnessed violence in neighborhood	3.6%	4.00%	21st
Saw or heard parents or adults slap, hit, kick, punch one another in the home	5.1%	6.0%	21st
Confirmed victims of physical abuse (rate per 1,000 children)	1.3%	1.1%	24th
Parent or guardian who died	3.0%	3.0%	25th
Confirmed victims of emotional abuse (rate per 1,000 children)	0.5%	0.1%	27th
Treated or judged unfairly because of his or her race or ethnic group	4.4%	3.3%	44th





A significant adverse event



Impact over a long period



Without help managing it



Often amplified by multiple, concurrent ACEs

As ACEs accumulate,  
the impact of  
adversity increases

# Adversity is Costly

- **Costs to Taxpayers, United States**

- National estimates childhood exposure to trauma alone costs society an estimated \$14.1 Trillion annually <sup>1</sup>
  - \$183 billion in direct medical spending
  - \$13.9 billion in lost healthy life years due to illness and chronic conditions

- **Tennessee**

- In 2017, ACEs among Tennessee adults led to an estimated **\$5.2 billion in direct medical costs and lost productivity from employees missing work.**<sup>2</sup>

- **Alaska**

- In Alaska, some analyses have estimated state-level costs incurred as a result of ACEs are associated with more than \$775 million in annual costs to the state from adult Medicaid use, smoking, diabetes, binge drinking, arthritis, and obesity.<sup>3</sup>





# Costs to Opportunity

Toxic stress can reduce a child's ability to manage their emotions and may make it difficult to learn, to play in a healthy way, or respond to challenging situations. If not addressed, toxic stress can increase the risk of\*:

- Adolescent pregnancy
- Smoking
- Intimate partner violence
- Disrupted relationships
- Incarceration
- Impaired learning
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Heart or liver disease
- Cancer
- Suicide





# ACEs are Fact, Not Fate

## Positive Childhood Experiences

- Being able to talk with family about their feelings
- Feeling supported by family in difficult times
- Participating in community traditions
- Feeling of belonging in high school
- Feeling supported by friends
- Having at least two non-parent adults who genuinely care
- Feeling safe and protected by an adult at home

**The more PCEs a child gets, the better their adult mental health is likely to be.**





## Recommendations

- Address housing stability for families including affordability and accessibility
- Improve access to behavioral health services in communities
- Boost investments to quality early childhood care and education to strengthen access for working families
- Ensure access to concrete supports when families need a hand up, including survivors of domestic violence
- Hold parents accountable in ways that minimize the impact of incarceration on children

# Experiences and the Environment



Parent/Caregiver



Child



## Why policy?

State policy change and budget investments can address multi-generational challenges on a broad scale and move upstream to prevent adverse experiences from occurring in the first place. These systemic changes can support all Kentucky communities in fostering opportunities for all kids and families to flourish.



# References

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