

# ***“Children’s exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences is the greatest unaddressed public health threat of our time.”***

- Robert W. Block, MD, FAAP, immediate past president of the American Academy of Pediatrics

## **CALIFORNIA IS FACING A HIDDEN PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

Far too often, the stressors in our children’s lives go unnoticed and unaddressed. These experiences cause a lifetime of health consequences, from difficulty concentrating in school to heart disease and diabetes – leading to inflated costs for the state’s juvenile justice, criminal justice, health care, and public health systems. By investing in detection, prevention, and treatment, California can improve the life chances of millions of youth and families, and build strong, healthy, and safe communities for generations to come.

## **A MAJORITY OF CALIFORNIANS HAVE EXPERIENCED AT LEAST ONE ACE**

During a study of over 17,000 individuals, two-thirds of study participants reported at least one ACE & 20 percent participants reported 3 or more ACEs

## **ACEs HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON A PERSON’S HEALTH FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADULTHOOD**

- Untreated ACEs can result in toxic stress in children – disrupting normal child development
- A person with 4 or more ACEs is:
  - 2.5 times more likely to have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
  - 4.6 times more likely to experience depression
  - 12 times more likely to be suicidal
- A woman with 7 or more ACEs is 5.5 times more likely to become pregnant as a teen
- A woman with 3 violent ACEs is 3.5 times more likely to become a victim of intimate partner violence and a man with 3 violence ACEs is 3.8 times more likely to perpetrate intimate partner violence

## **WHAT THE STATE CAN DO TO ADDRESS THIS PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

- Support tracking of adverse childhood experiences data
- Integrate screening of ACEs in general pediatric care and provide funding for pilot intervention programs to investigate the most effective interventions
- Ensure trauma-informed care for children is promoted as an option for provider continuing medical education and expand access to trauma-informed care
- Encourage state leaders to explore ways to elevate trauma-informed care as part of any joint effort to improve student performance and health outcomes for children

Our three organizations have come together to advocate for a healthy and safe California:

**CHILDREN NOW**

*In our advocacy for Pro-Kid policies in California, Children Now has long recognized the effects of trauma on the foster youth population. As the impacts of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences on children’s developmental trajectories have become more evident, Children Now has increasingly worked with our partners to advance trauma prevention and trauma-informed care policies throughout child welfare, early childhood, and health systems.*

CENTER FOR  
**YOUTH WELLNESS**  
health begins with hope

*The Center for Youth Wellness believes that health begins with hope. We are a health organization imbedded within a primary care pediatric home serving children and families in the Bayview Hunters Point neighborhood in San Francisco. We heal children’s brains and bodies piloting the best treatments for toxic stress and sharing our findings nationally. We have the power to revolutionize pediatric medicine and transform the lives of countless kids – giving them a fair shot to grow up healthy and succeed in life.*

**CALIFORNIANS  
FOR SAFETY AND JUSTICE**

*Californians for Safety and Justice, a project of the Tides Center, is a nonprofit working with Californians from all walks of life to replace justice system waste with solutions that create safe neighborhoods and save public dollars. Through advocacy, education, partnerships and county support, we promote strategies to stop cycles of crime and build healthy communities. We advocate for increased investments into programs that can resolve unaddressed health issues, like ACEs, mental health and substance abuse, and building healthy communities.*

### **What are ACEs?**

*Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, refer to traumatic stressors that occur during childhood such as abuse (physical, emotional, and sexual), neglect (physical and emotional) or household dysfunction.*

### **What is toxic stress?**

*Toxic stress is a prolonged activation of the stress response that can induce a disruption in a child’s brain architecture and other organ systems that occurs as a result of strong, frequent, or prolonged adversity, such as ACEs.*