

Associations Between Adverse and Positive Childhood Experiences and Mental Health and Substance Use

Analyses of 2021 survey data* revealed that **adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** are significantly associated with substance use and mental health challenges among Maryland Middle and High School students.

Additionally, it found that **positive childhood experiences (PCEs)** are associated with significant risk reductions of substance use and mental health challenges.

Specific ACEs and the number of ACEs youth have experienced are associated with increased risk of substance use.

High school students who have witnessed domestic violence are

6.3x more likely to ever use substances

23x more likely to try Heroin



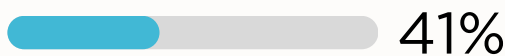
Middle school students who have experienced 3+ ACEs are

5x more likely to use alcohol

5.3x more likely to ever use substances

Mental health challenges, substance use, and ACEs are interrelated.

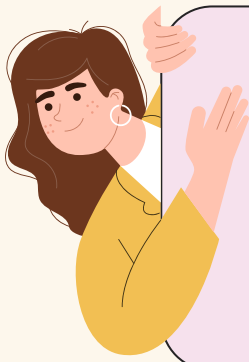
41% of middle schoolers and **45% of high schoolers** who experience mental health difficulties and substance use have also **experienced alcohol and drug use in their household**



Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) are associated with reduced risk of substance use for youth experiencing behavioral health challenges.

Safety at school and to and from school is associated reduced risk of substance use in high schoolers by

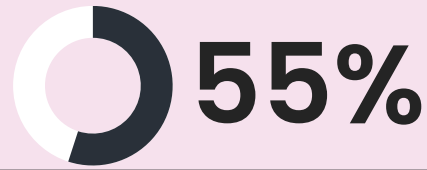




Food security is associated with reduced risk of substance use in middle schoolers by



and in high schoolers by



So what can you do?

Source: CDC.gov

Community members

- Prevent ACEs and help mitigate their effects by creating opportunities for PCEs.
- You can help promote PCEs for children in your care by:
 - Establishing consistent routines
 - Praising children when they do something well--or try to do something well
 - Giving children your undivided attention when they're trying to talk to you
 - Set aside time each day to play with and/or talk to children in your care

Providers

A client using substances may have also experienced ACEs and vice versa.

- Provide trauma-informed screening and assessment for traumatic experiences and substance use.
- Tailor treatment to address both trauma and substance use when applicable.
- Disseminate information to families about the benefits of PCEs and how to foster them with their children.
- Share information on available services and supports to help people meet their basic needs, such as food and housing.

Organizations

Trauma-informed workforce development is essential in both the behavioral health *and* substance use treatment community.

- Engage your workforce in trauma-informed training and quality improvement efforts, such as the Building Healing Systems Learning Community. [Apply Here](#).
- Increase collaboration between trauma, domestic violence, and substance use prevention programs.
- Youth-focused organizations including schools engage in quality improvement to foster safe and supportive environments.