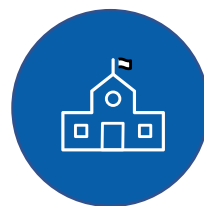


# Understanding and Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

**Phyllis Holditch Niolon, PhD**

Presentation at the Midwest Injury Prevention Alliance  
September 21, 2022



# Adverse Childhood Experiences

## ABUSE



Physical



Emotional



Sexual

## NEGLECT



Physical



Emotional

## HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES



Mental Illness



Parent Treated Violently



Divorce



Incarcerated Relative



Substance Abuse

**Expanded view of ACES, not included in the traditional measure:**

- Experiencing discrimination
- Experiencing bullying or peer violence
- Experiencing teen dating violence
- Housing insecurity or homelessness
- Food insecurity
- Living in extreme poverty
- Witnessing violence in your community



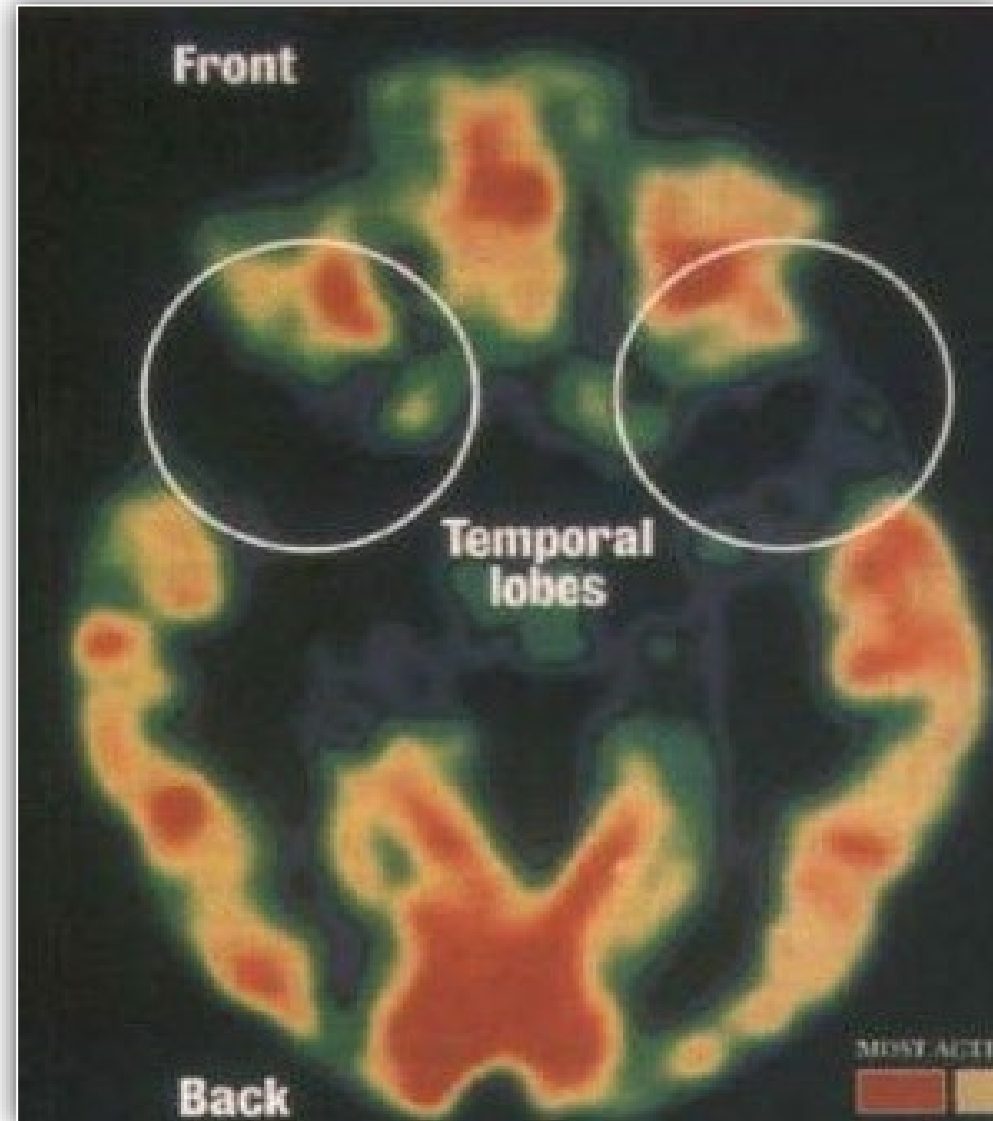
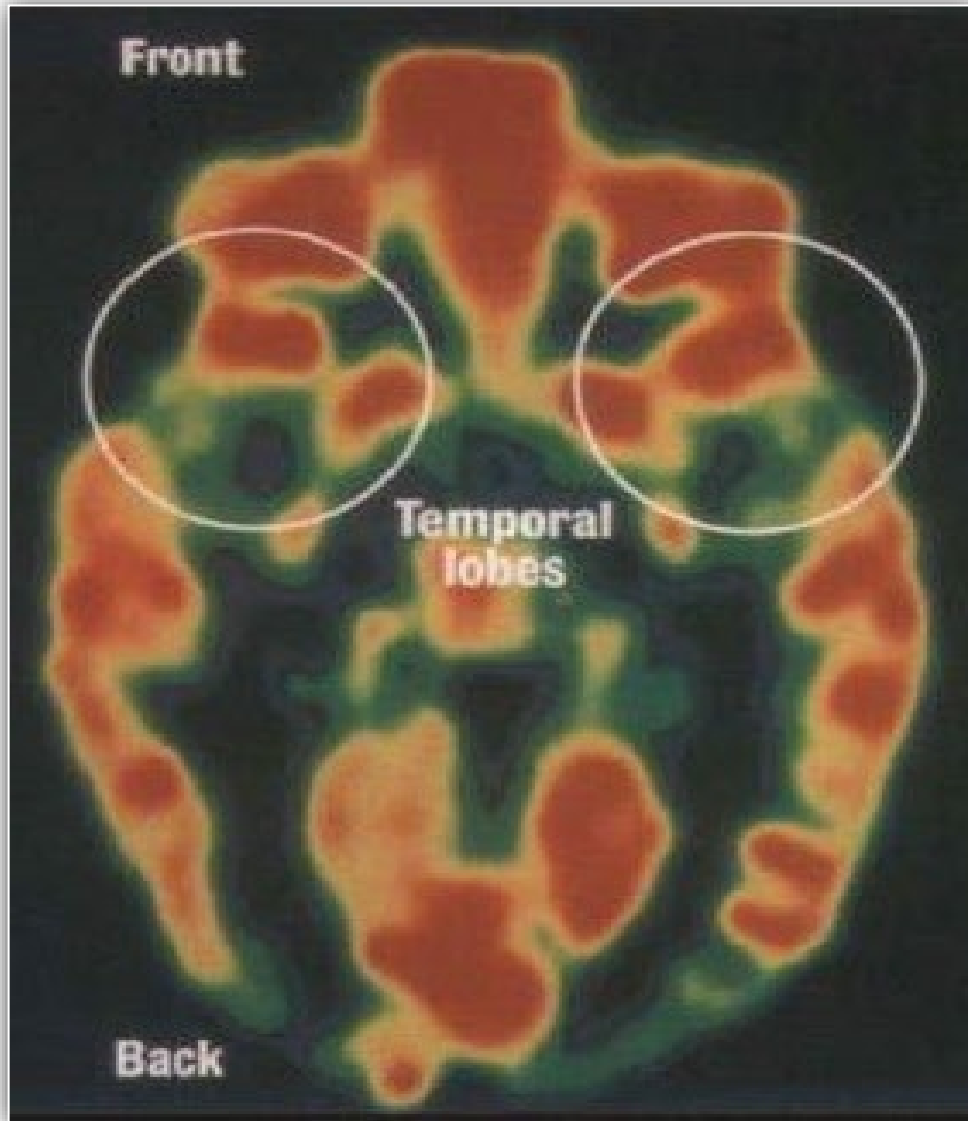
Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels.

Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

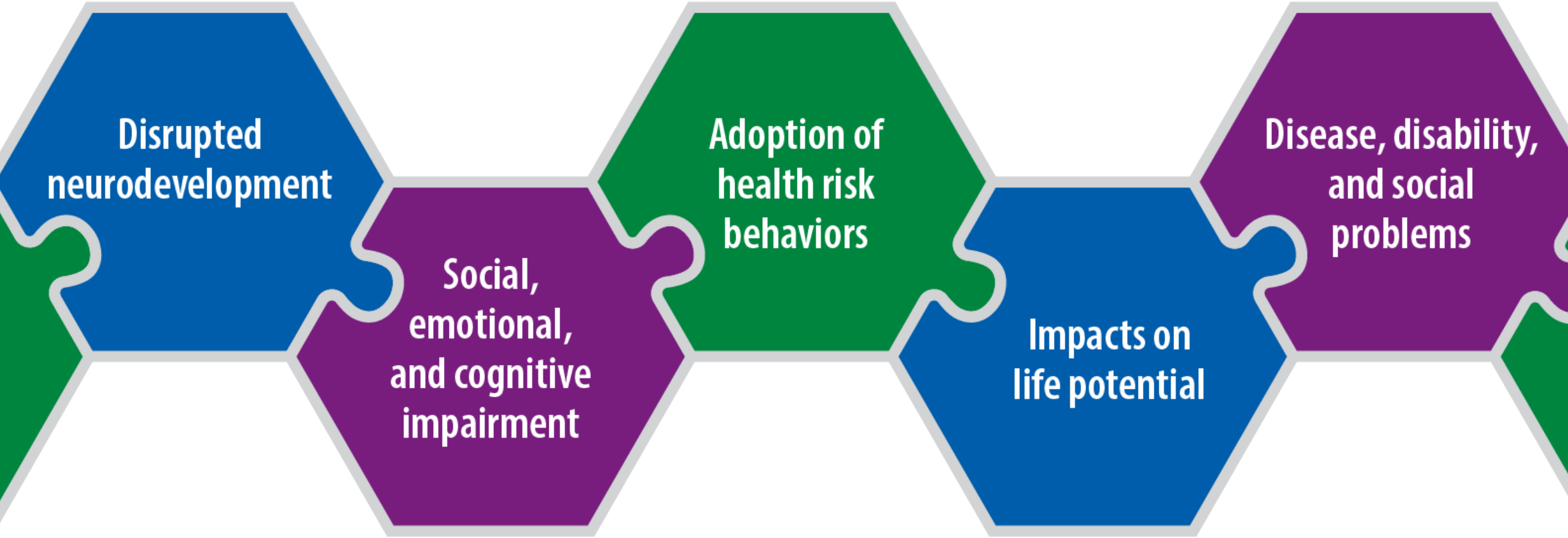
Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.



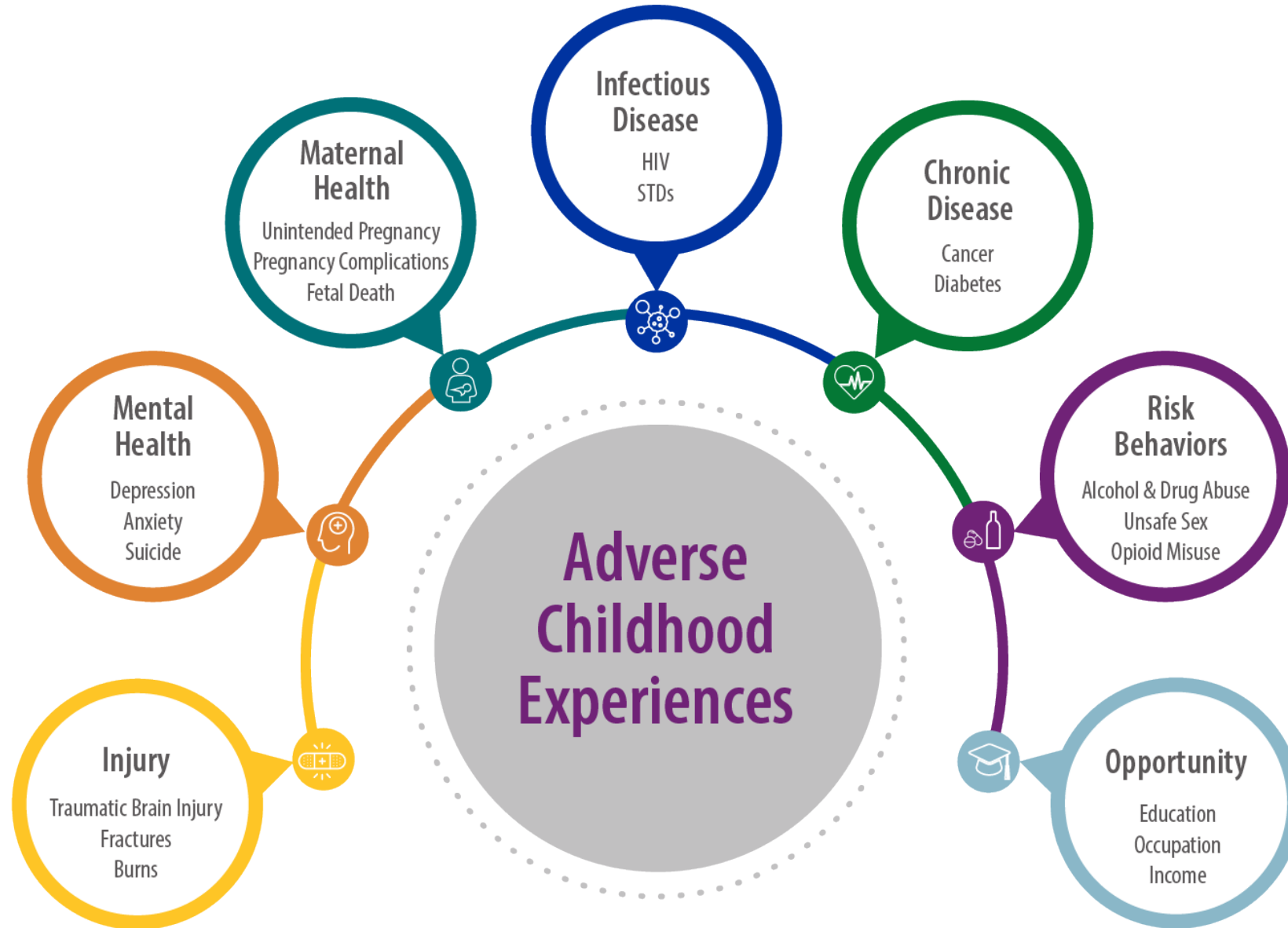
# Trauma Compromises Early Brain Development



# ACES influence health and opportunity



# Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts Across the Lifespan



# ACEs are common and are associated with many health problems

**Vitalsigns<sup>CDC</sup>**<sup>TM</sup> #vitalsigns NOV. 2019

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**  
Preventing early trauma to improve adult health

Want to learn more?  
[www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces](http://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces)

**1 in 6** 1 in 6 adults experienced four or more types of ACEs.

**5 of 10** At least 5 of the top 10 leading causes of death are associated with ACEs.

**44%** Preventing ACEs could reduce the number of adults with depression by as much as 44%.

**Overview:**  
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood. ACEs can include violence, abuse, and growing up in a family with mental health or substance use problems. Toxic stress from ACEs can change brain development and affect how the body responds to stress. ACEs are linked to chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance misuse in adulthood. However, ACEs can be prevented.

**Preventing ACEs can help children and adults thrive and potentially:**


- Lower risk for conditions like depression, asthma, cancer, and diabetes in adulthood.
- Reduce risky behaviors like smoking, and heavy drinking.
- Improve education and job potential.
- Stop ACEs from being passed from one generation to the next.


**PROBLEM:**

**Adverse Childhood Experiences impact lifelong health and opportunities.**

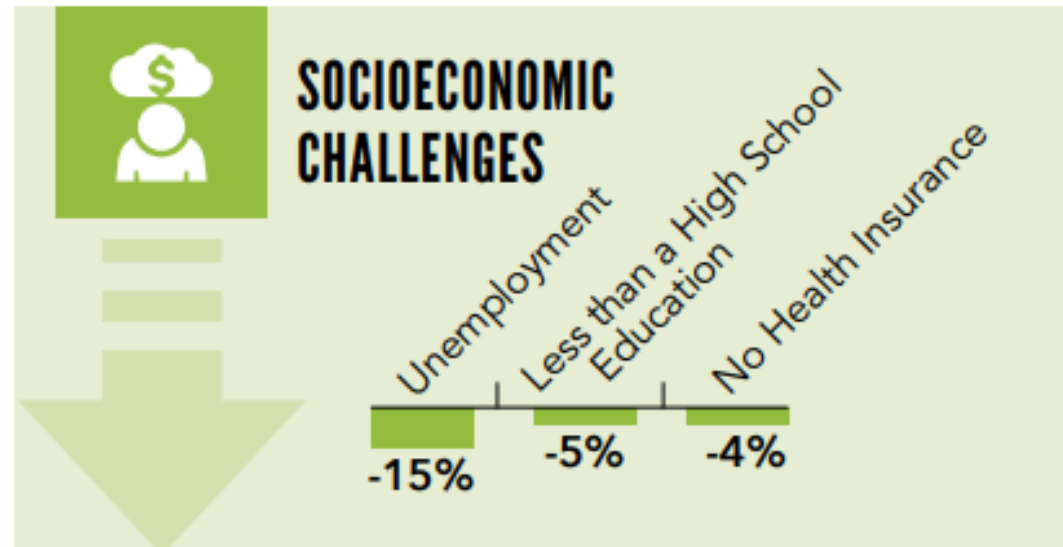
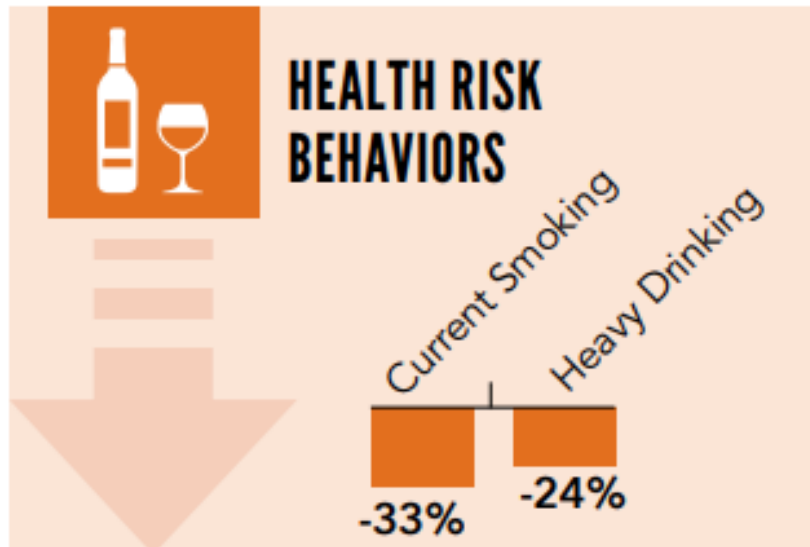
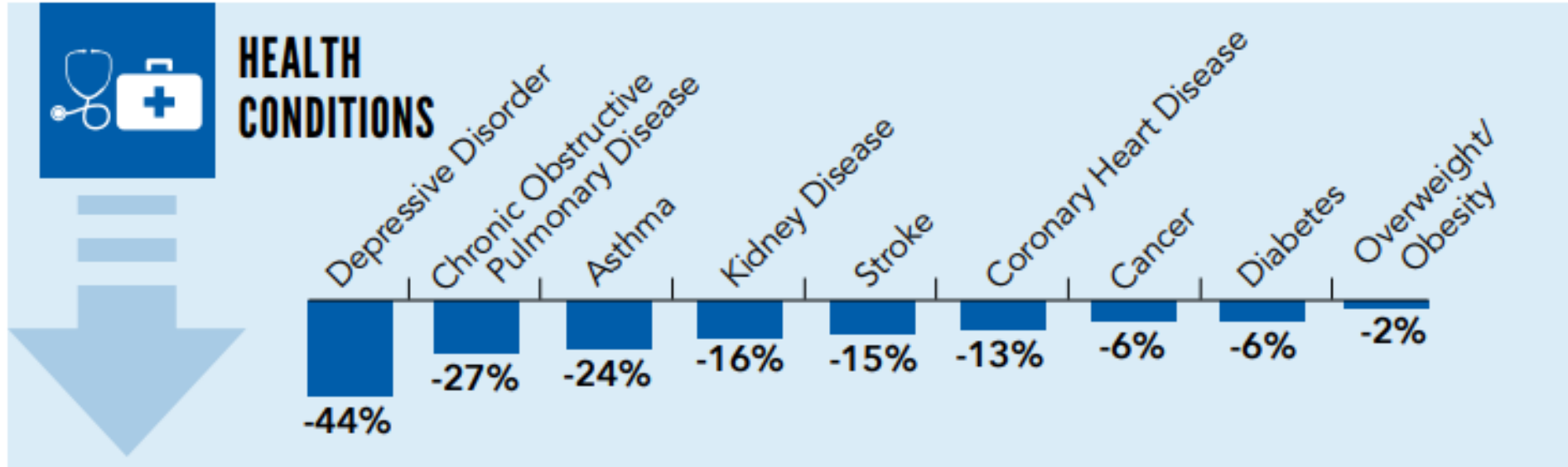
**ACEs are common and the effects can add up over time.**

- 61% of adults had at least one ACE and 16% had 4 or more types of ACEs.
- Females and several racial/ethnic minority groups were at greater risk for experiencing 4 or more ACEs.
- Many people do not realize that exposure to ACEs is associated with increased risk for health problems across the lifespan.



 **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**  
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control

# Potential Reduction of Negative Outcome in Adulthood





# Preventing ACEs could reduce a large number of health conditions.



UP TO

**21 MILLION**  
CASES OF  
DEPRESSION



UP TO

**1.9 MILLION**  
CASES OF  
HEART DISEASE



UP TO

**2.5 MILLION**  
CASES OF  
OVERWEIGHT/OBESITY

SOURCE: National Estimates based on 2017 BRFSS; Vital Signs, MMWR November 2019.



**Preventing ACES is a CDC Priority**

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**Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect:**  
A Technical Package for Policy, Norm, and Programmatic Activities

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

**STOP SV:**  
A Technical Package to Prevent Sexual Violence

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

**Preventing Suicide:**  
A Technical Package of Policy, Programs, and Practices

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

**Preventing Intimate Partner Violence Across the Lifespan:**  
A Technical Package of Programs, Policies, and Practices

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

**A Comprehensive Technical Package for the Prevention of Youth Violence and Associated Risk Behaviors**

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

**Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs):**  
Leveraging the Best Available Evidence

National Center for Injury Prevention and Control  
Division of Violence Prevention

# Six Strategies to Prevent ACEs



Strengthen Economic Supports for Families



Promote Social Norms that Protect Against Violence and Adversity



Ensure a Strong Start for Children



Teach Skills



Connect Youth to Caring Adults and Activities



Intervene to Lessen Immediate and Long-term Harms

A wooden house frame is shown against a blurred background of warm, golden light. On a dark grey base inside the house, there are four stacks of coins of increasing height from left to right. The text 'Strengthen Economic Supports for Families' is overlaid in white on the left side of the image.

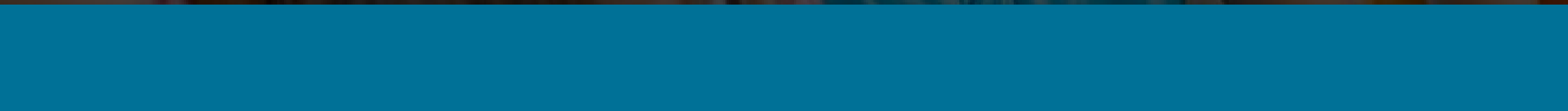
# Strengthen Economic Supports for Families

A young girl with curly hair and a boy are high-fiving outdoors. The girl is on the left, looking towards the boy on the right. They are both smiling and appear to be in a positive, celebratory mood. The background is a soft-focus green, suggesting an outdoor setting like a park or schoolyard. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Promote Social Norms that  
Protect Against Violence and  
Adversity



# Ensure a Strong Start for Children





Teach Skills

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# Connect Youth to Caring Adults and Activities

The image features two hands, one from the top right and one from the bottom left, reaching towards each other. The background is a soft, out-of-focus gradient of colors, including shades of blue, green, and yellow, suggesting a bright, possibly outdoor setting. The hands are positioned as if they are about to meet or are in the process of holding each other.

Intervene to Lessen Immediate  
and Long-term Harms

# Violence Prevention in **PRACTICE**



**VetoViolence**

VetoViolence.cdc.gov



7 phases in *comprehensive* violence prevention

VetoViolence helps communities use the best-available evidence to prevent violence





# Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Data to Action (PACE:D2A)

- + **Goal 1:** Build/enhance an ACE surveillance infrastructure
- + **Goal 2:** Implement ACE prevention strategies
- + **Goal 3:** Conduct foundational activities to support D2A

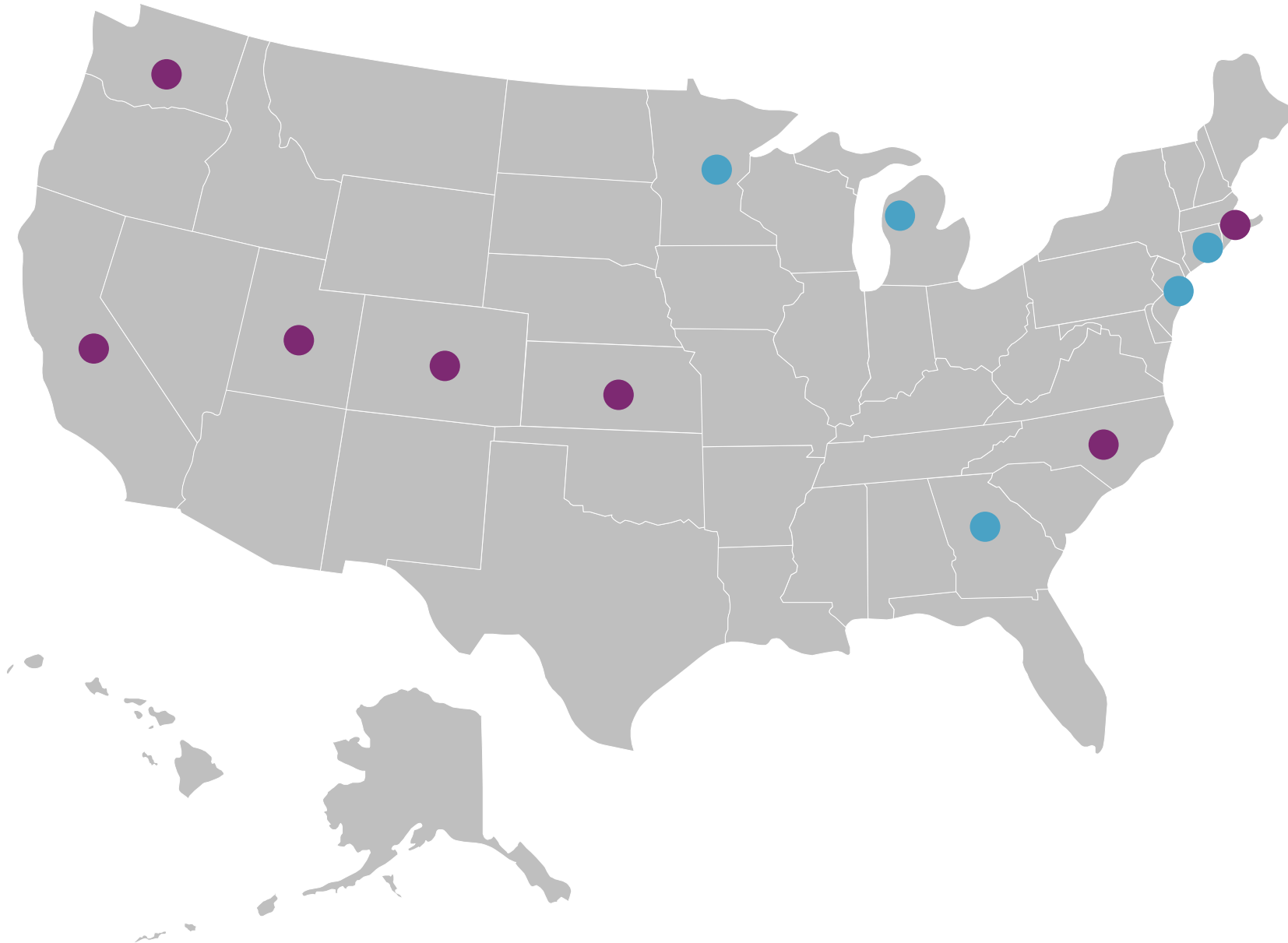
# Essentials for Childhood: Steps to Create Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments

- + **Goal 1:** Raise Awareness and Commitment to Promote Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships and Environments and Prevent Child Maltreatment
- + **Goal 2:** Use Data to Inform Actions
- + **Goal 3:** Create the Context for Healthy Children and Families through Norms Change and Programs
- + **Goal 4:** Create the Context for Healthy Children and Families through Policies

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/essentials-for-childhood-framework508.pdf>



# ACEs Investments by State and Organization

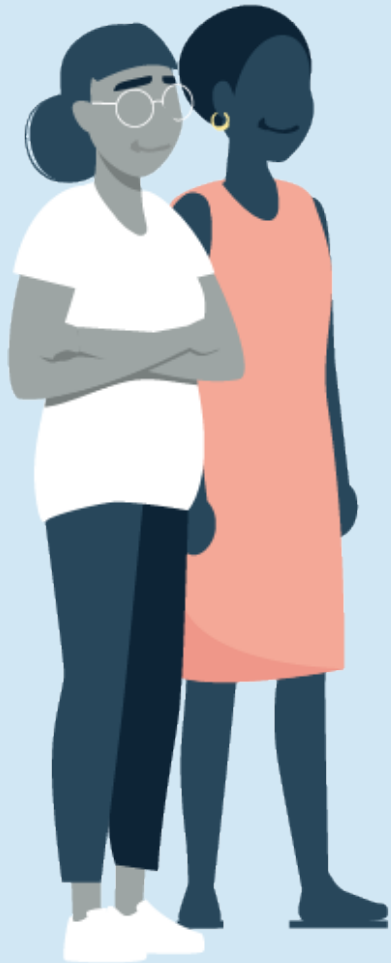


## Funded ACEs Partners

- Essentials for Childhood
- Preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences: Data To Action

# Healthy Childhoods Start Now

Working together, we can help create neighborhoods, communities, and a world in which every child can thrive.





# Thank you!

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