

Press Release

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Adverse Childhood Experiences Linked to Poor Adult Health Issue Brief Four of a Five Issue Brief Series

The Oklahoma Institute for Child Advocacy (OICA) has released the fourth brief in a series of five documenting how adverse childhood experiences effect health in adulthood. Issue brief four describes the impact of mental illness and substance abuse on children and their later adult lives.

This brief is the fourth in a series with information derived from the ACE (Adverse Childhood Experience) Study, a collaborative research project of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Department of Preventive Medicine at Kaiser Permanente (KP) in San Diego, California. This on-going study has tracked over 17,000 middle-class people to determine the correlation between childhood experiences and adult health.

Divided into ten ACE categories, the study examines five areas of child maltreatment and five areas of household or family dysfunction: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, mother treated violently, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce and incarcerated household member.

Oklahoma has one of the highest rates of mental illness in the nation. Addictive disorders, including alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, are the number one public health problem in Oklahoma. Mental and addictive disorders impose a greater burden of disability on Oklahoma citizens than cardiovascular disease or cancer. The costs of dealing with these issues are staggering. The Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force conservatively placed the costs at more than \$3.2 billion annually in direct expenditures.

According to Anne Roberts, OICA executive director, "Children who live around mental illness and substance abuse are at significant risk for an unpredictable home life. Mental illness and substance abuse are linked to higher rates of domestic violence, divorce, unemployment and involvement in the criminal justice system."

This fourth issue brief suggests several policy opportunities for addressing the problems of mental illness and substance abuse and their impact on children. The coordination of adult and pediatric health care with related mental health and substance abuse services needs to be improved. The means to co-manage care need to be developed, encouraging practitioners who treat mental illness and substance abuse to assess for other forms of household dysfunction. Finally state resources for mental health and substance abuse treatment need to be appropriately allocated.

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OICA is hosting a series of presentations by Dr. Vincent Felitti, author of the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study, on January 25th at Children's Hospital and the Oklahoma History Center. On that same day, OICA will release the *2006-07 Oklahoma KIDS COUNT Factbook* that highlights the ACEs Study, and documents the status of Oklahoma's children and youth on a county-by-county basis. For a detailed agenda and registration information, go to www.oica.org. Issue brief five will be released later in January.

Adverse Childhood Experience categories

CHILD MALTREATMENT

Emotional Abuse:

An adult in the household often swearing, insulting or putting down a child and /or the child occasionally fearing being physically hurt.

Physical abuse:

A child being pushed, grabbed, slapped or having an object thrown so hard that marks or injuries were made.

Sexual abuse:

An adult touching or fondling a child in a sexual way.

Emotional neglect:

Participants used a scored scale to show the extent that their family was a source of strength including feeling loved, special, protected and supported.

Physical neglect:

Participants used a scale to show how the household adults met their physical needs such as having enough to eat, having clean clothes and being taken to the doctor.

HOUSEHOLD OR FAMILY DISFUNCTION

Mother treated violently:

A child hearing or seeing the mother or stepmother being physically abused.

Household substance abuse:

A child living with a person who abused alcohol or drugs.

Household mental illness:

A child living with a person who was depressed or mentally ill or had attempted suicide.

Parental separation or divorce Incarcerated household member

Parents were ever separated or divorced.

Incarcerated household Member:

A household member went to prison.