

# Promising Practices for Addressing Adverse Childhood Experiences in Children with Disabilities: Voices from the PacWest LEND Leadership Consortium

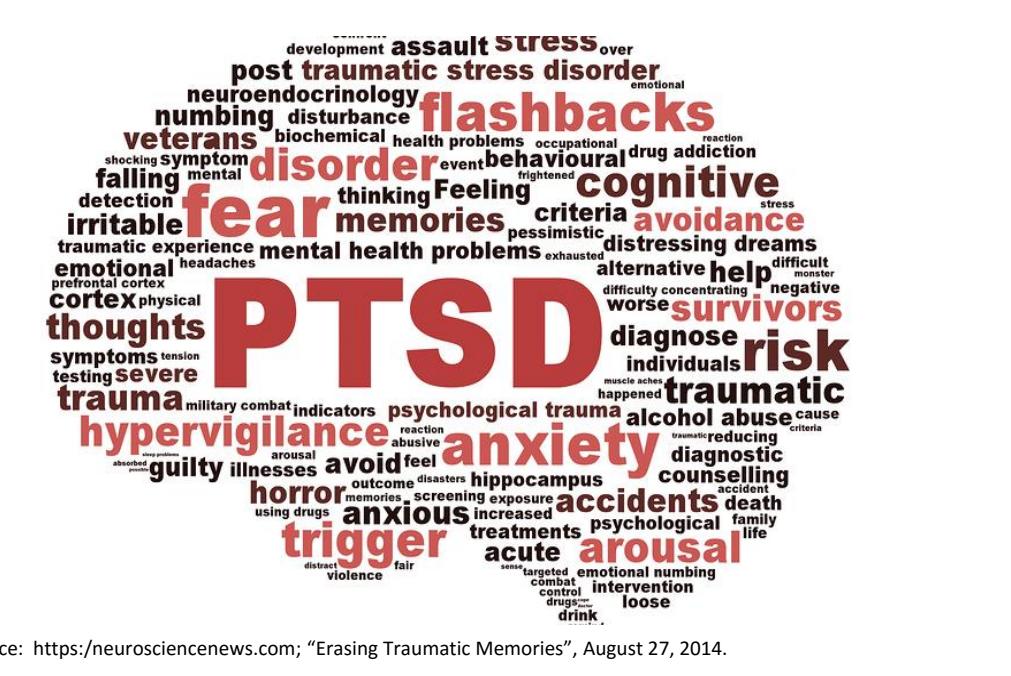
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### Objectives

- Overview of 2011/12 National Survey of Children's Health on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs);
- Discuss the importance of awareness of ACEs within the field of neurodevelopmental disabilities;
- Describe examples of training activities within PacWest LEND programs that prepare trainees to recognize and screen for ACEs, evaluate its impact and implement trauma-informed care.

### Practice Implications:

- Routinely seek history of ACEs from all children and families.
- Advocate for early childhood interventions and programs that support high quality early childhood.
- Advocate for evidence-based therapeutic services for maltreated children.
- Advocate for services that support parents (parenting, respite, quality affordable child care).



### Create Resilience:

#### Help Children By:

- Gaining an understanding of ACEs in their life.
- Creating environments where they are safe, emotionally and physically
- Helping children identify feelings and control emotions
- Creating protective factors at home, in schools and in communities

#### Protective Factors:

- Parental resilience and supportive relationships
- Nurturing relationships with caring adult
- Supportive social connections and peer relationships
- Concrete supports for basic needs (food, housing, health care, etc.)
- Knowledge of parenting and child development
- Social emotional competence

### ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

#### What are they?

Experiences and exposures in childhood that are major risk factors for certain illnesses and poor quality of life.

#### Why are they important?

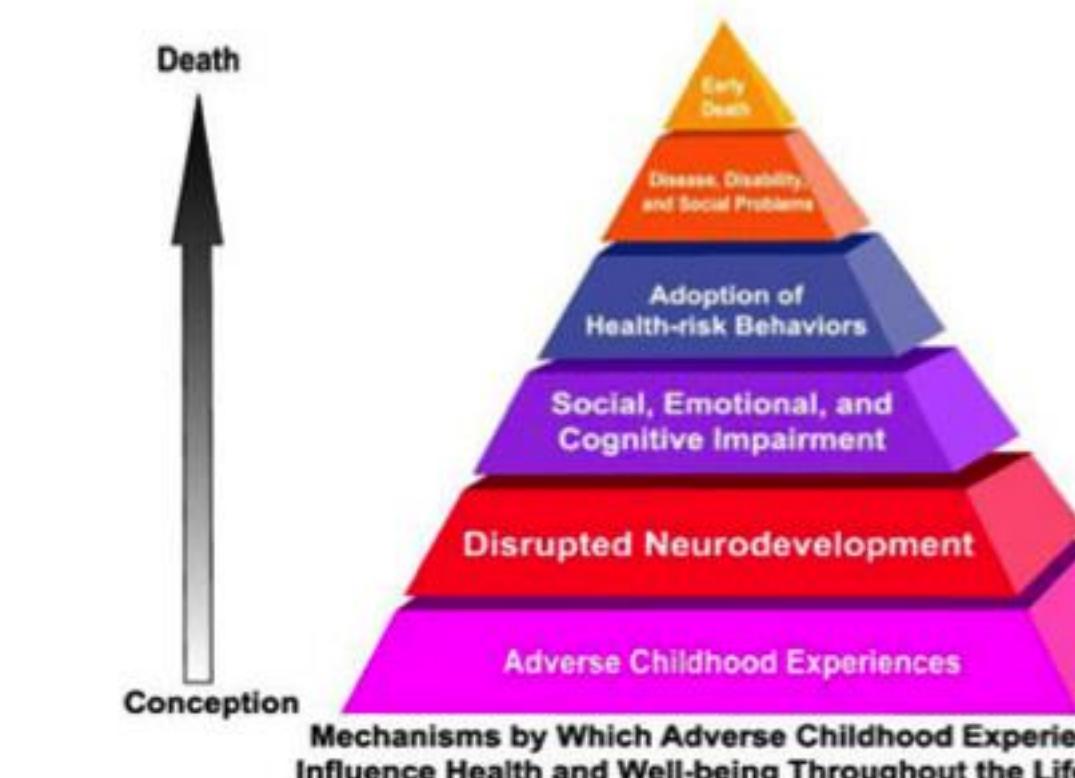
Findings from the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study demonstrate a link between specific stressors in childhood and risk behaviors and health problems in adulthood. (<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/>).

Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities are at Increased risk for:

Neglect, Physical Abuse, and Sexual Abuse  
(Sullivan & Knutson, 2000; Olson & Jacobson, 2014)

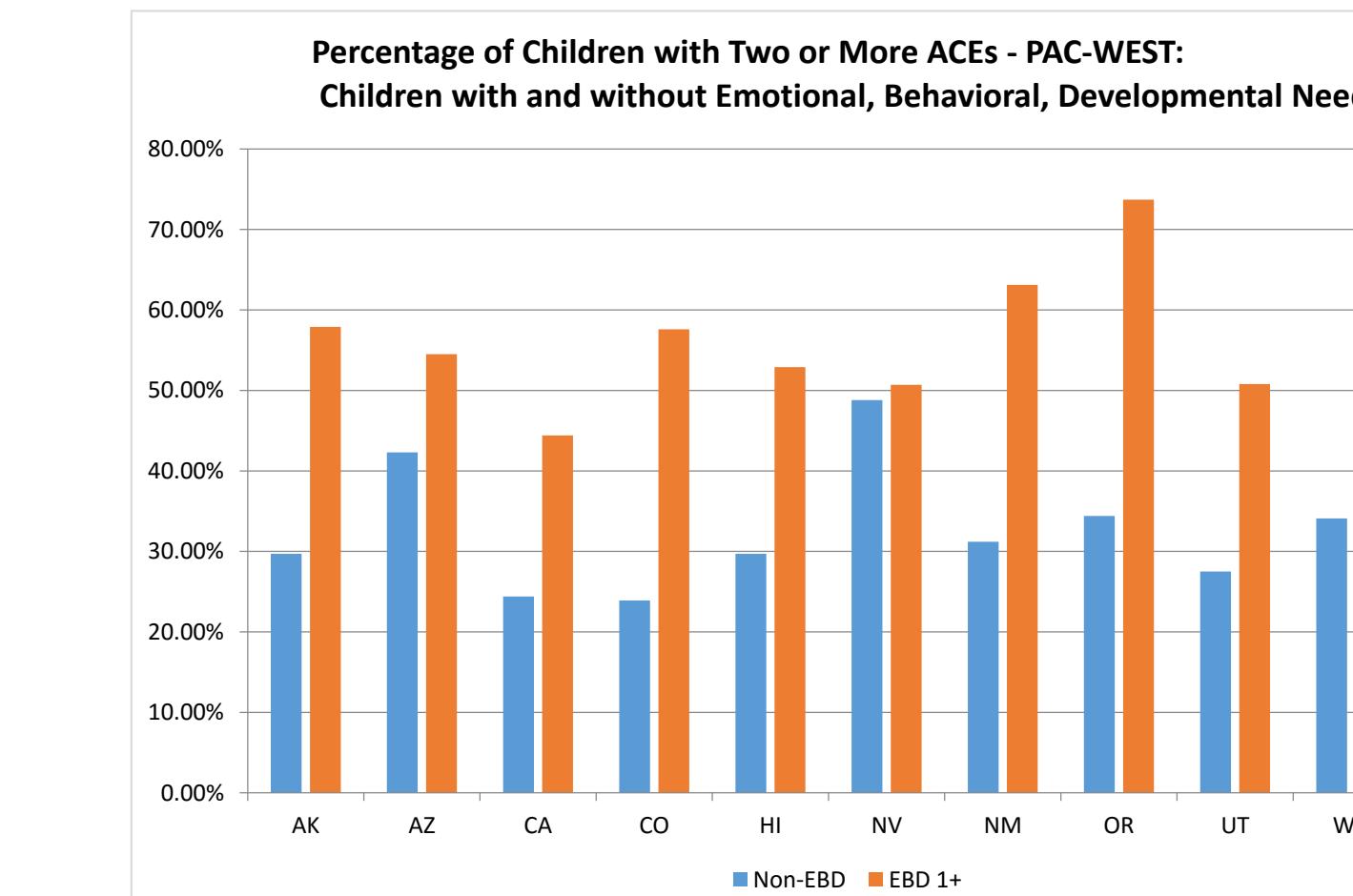
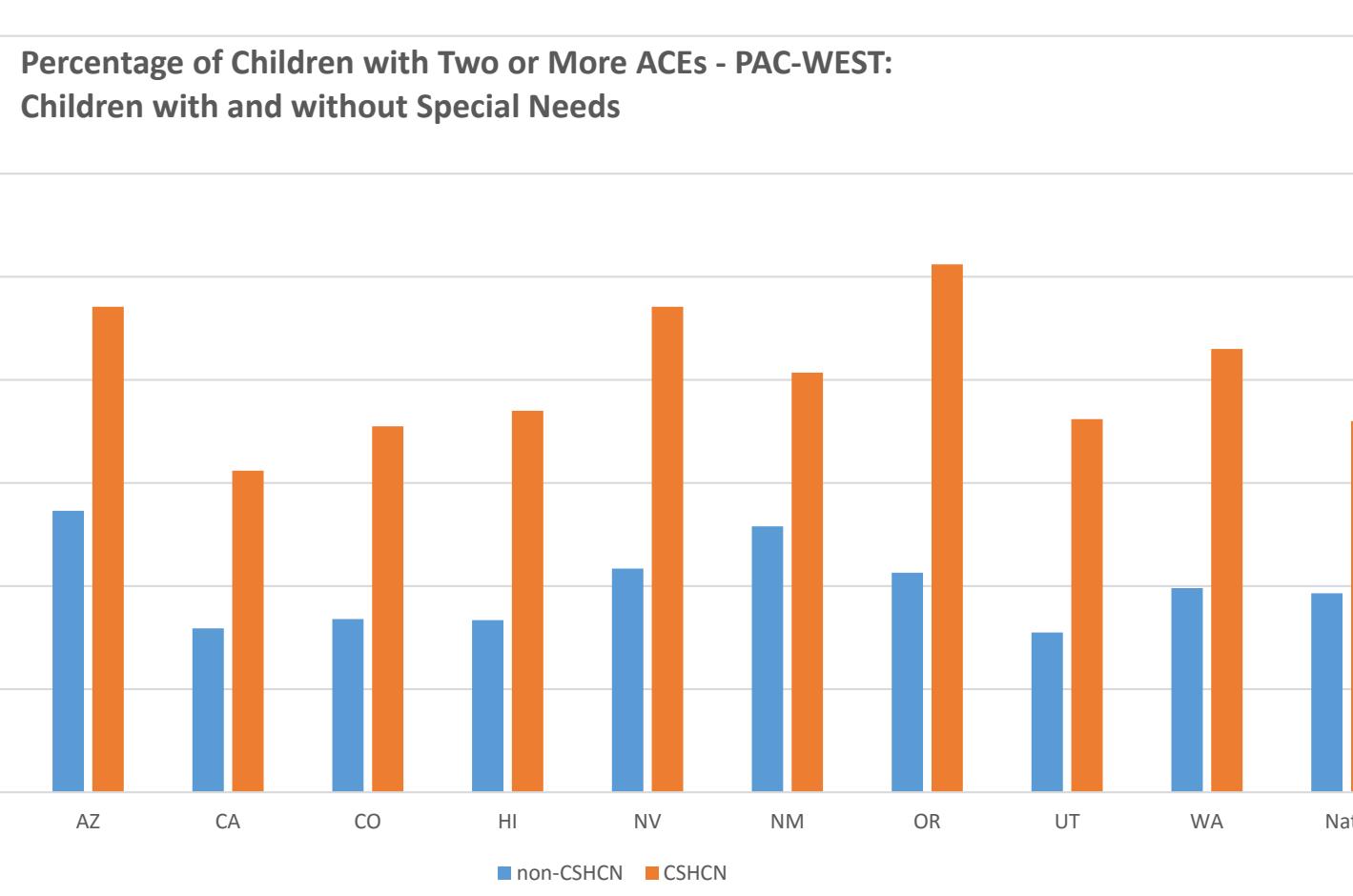
#### Contributing Characteristics:

Higher emotional, physical, economic and social demands on families  
More family stress and social isolation in parent  
Unable to cope with care and supervision required  
Lack of respite/breaks in child care responsibilities  
(Hibbard, et al. 2007; Olson & Jacobson, 2014)



The NSCH 2011/2012, modified the 10 experiences in the original ACEs Study to include the following nine adverse family experiences, (1) socioeconomic hardship, (2) divorce/separation of parent, (3) death of parent, (4) parent served time in jail; (5) witness to domestic violence, (7) lived with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal, (8) lived with someone with alcohol/drug problem, (9) treated or judged unfairly due to race/ethnicity.

The graphs below show the percentage of children with two or more ACEs as reported in the NSCH 2011-2012 for the Pac-West LEND leadership Consortium States. As illustrated, children with special health needs and children with emotional, behavioral and developmental needs experience more ACEs than children without.



### PROMISING PRACTICES: VOICES FROM THREE PACWEST LEND TRAINING PROGRAMS

#### ALASKA:

- Seminar: Alaska Mental Health Board addressed national and state perspectives on ACEs data
  - Presentations: ACEs and children with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities; Trauma-Informed Care; *Tipping the Scales; The Resilience Game from the Center on the Developing Child: Harvard Univ.*
  - Graduate Course: *ACEs in the North*, elective offered by public health graduate program; *Interdisciplinary Explorations of Alaska's Critical Behavioral Health Issues*, LEND Faculty
- LEND Fellows are participating with the DDC on assessment of child care for children with disabilities, best practices and training needs.

#### NEVADA

- Didactic seminar on Trauma-Informed Care
- Leadership Projects: Video training on developmental disabilities for foster care parents; Evaluation of pilot program to prevent out-of-state institutional placement for children with both intellectual disabilities and behavioral health needs.
- Autism Assessment Clinic: From 2014-16, only 41% of those children referred for autism evaluation met criteria for an ASD diagnosis. Forty-five percent of the non-ASD diagnoses given were psychiatric diagnoses. Trainees learn diagnostic skills to differentiate symptoms of overlapping and co-morbid disorders.

#### WASHINGTON

- Washington State enacted legislation to prevent ACEs and mitigate effects in 2011.
- Leadership Projects: Adopt a County, LTTs prepare a report describing geography, demographics, health equity issues and needs assessment on ACEs, ASD or UDS.
- Seminars on ACEs: Early Brain Development and Toxic Stress; Adverse Childhood Experiences Part 2: A Case Study; Adverse Childhood Experiences Part 3: Policy and Advocacy
- Clinical: Quarterly Pre-Assessment Conferences on ACEs; LEND Clinicians and Fellows screen patients for ACEs

#### Solutions to address ACEs within the field of neurodevelopmental disabilities

- Education: Increase recognition of presence and impact of ACEs and trauma-informed practices.
- Research: Evaluate impact of ACEs on children with disabilities and outcomes of interventions.
- Policy: Bridge arbitrary divisions between the "mental health" and "disability" fields.

#### Conclusions:

- Information about the impact of early childhood experiences is highly relevant to the field of neurodevelopmental disabilities.
- As future leaders, LEND trainees must receive training on recognizing adverse childhood experiences, evaluating its impact and implementing trauma-informed care.
- Many opportunities exist to incorporate training within the LEND curriculum.
- Ultimately, research and policy innovations will need to address the significant public health problem of adverse childhood experiences.

REFERENCES AVAILABLE ON REQUEST