

Kasserian Ingera – And How Are the Children?

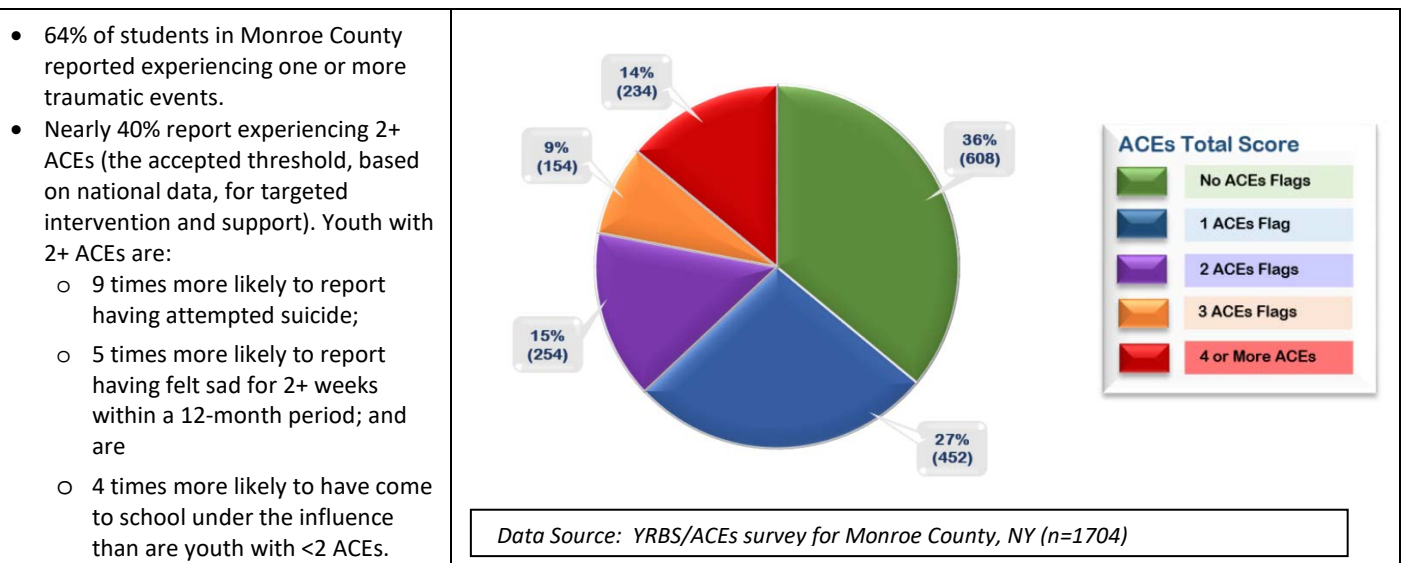
“Kasserian Ingera” (which translates to “and how are the children?”), is the traditional greeting passed between Masai warriors in Africa. This everyday greeting shows the high value they place on their children’s well-being – as a reflection of the well-being of their entire society. Even warriors without children of their own use the greeting, and when life is good, warriors respond back with, “All the children are well.” This concept provides a perfect backdrop to some exciting work taking place in the Rochester area – ***From ACEs to Assets: Growing Resilience in Monroe County***

National research has demonstrated that experiencing traumatic events before age 18 can create dangerous levels of stress, which impacts healthy brain development if there is no intervention or support. As youth get older, exposure to trauma can increase the likelihood they will engage in risky behaviors and have more incidents of poor mental and physical health outcomes in later years. An accumulation of these adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) compounds these risks¹.

In 2015, the Monroe County Office of Mental Health partnered with the Department of Public Health and local school districts to include 11 ACE questions in the [Youth Risk and Behaviors Survey](#) (YRBS). This groundbreaking initiative:

- Provided a detailed descriptive analysis of students’ ACE scores along with general demographics – including the relationship between a student’s ACE score and academic achievement;
- Illustrated the clear and unequivocal correlations between risk for concerning health, mental health, and behavioral outcomes such as substance use, depression, suicidal ideation, and violence; and
- Underscored the need for continued expansion of trauma-responsive practices across education and youth-serving systems

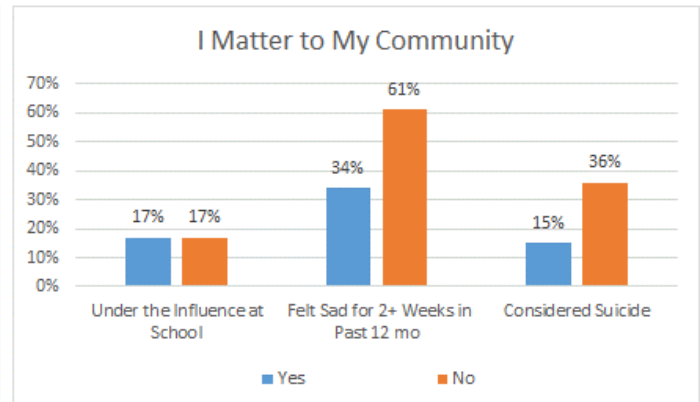
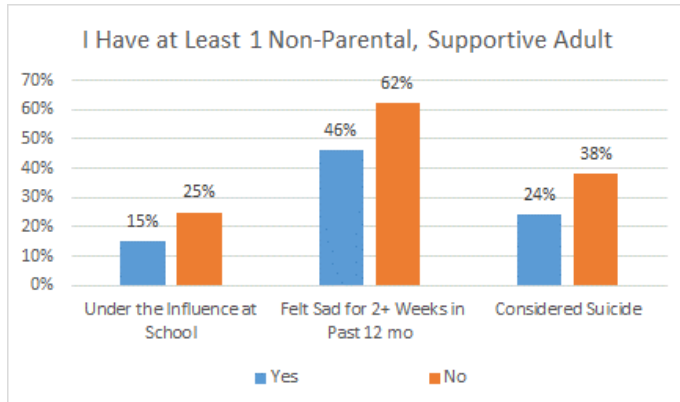
In 2017, the Monroe County YRBS/ACEs initiative expanded this important work to include indicators of resilience. This provides an unprecedented opportunity to look at the role that increasing reliance plays in decreasing risk for mental health, substance use, suicide ideation, and violence. Here’s what the most recent data tell us:



¹ Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person’s lifespan, including those associated with substance misuse.

While these data illustrate the significant level of exposure to trauma in our region, the analyses also show that we can mediate the impact of this exposure by concentrating on those things that build resilience in young people. For example:

- ✓ Youth have at least 1 non-parental adult support, risk for substance use - being under the influence at school, suicide ideation and depression all decline.
- ✓ When youth feel they matter to their community, risk for suicide ideation and depression decline.



These local results are in line with research that has consistently shown us that resilience trumps ACEs. By focusing on how when we, as adults, are building resiliency in youth, we minimize risks and help all youth thrive – even in the face of trauma. Simple things, like just listening to youth, cannot only increase their self-worth, but it also forms a foundation for building genuine relationships with trusting adults to make youth more resilient to negative occurrences. While we may focus on those who work with youth like educators, counselors, pediatricians, etc., there is a role for every adult in our community to play in increasing the health and well-being in youth. We can all help young people understand that they matter to us, that we care, and that they are valuable beyond measure.

Stay tuned for updates as analysis of these data continue – as do efforts among a growing number of collaborators to build resilience in our community. To learn more, please visit the [CCSI website](#), [Finger Lakes ACES connection](#), or contact Dr. Elizabeth Meeker at emeeker@ccsi.org

February ACEs Community Event

On February 8th, CCSI partnered with [The Wilson Foundation](#), [Rochester Area Community Foundation](#), and Monroe County Office of Mental Health to host a sold out event bringing together more than 200 educators, physicians, providers and other community partners to discuss how trauma and ACEs impact the health and well-being of youth in Monroe County — and importantly, what we can do as a community to mediate the impact and help youth become more resilient.

Attendees watched the film [Resilience: the Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope](#), which set the stage for a review of data results from the most recent Monroe County YRBS/ACEs analysis presented by CCSI's [Elizabeth Meeker](#), Director of Training and Practice Transformation and Amy Scheel-Jones, Chief, Planning, Monroe County OMH. Through the analysis completed by Deb Hodgeman, Chief, Information Management and Analytics, Monroe County OMH and her team, these data results illustrate the prevalence of trauma in our community – and how the accumulation of ACEs increases the risk for lower academic performance, issues related to mental health, substance use, violence, and suicidal thoughts or actions. Event attendees worked in small groups to explore the relevance of the youth survey data to their own work, and talked about what direct actions they could take to help youth become more resilient.

The event also included a panel discussion, where panelists offered local examples of positive work already begun in Monroe County. Panelists included: Jennifer Perry of Hillside Family of Agencies; Dr. Laura J. Shipley of Panorama Pediatric Group; and Lynn Carragher and Dr. Lesli Meyers of Brockport Central School District. They shared their successes and challenges, as well as practical steps to be more responsive to all young people, while specifically helping those who have experienced or witnessed traumatic events.

Watch videos and read more about this event at the [Democrat & Chronicle](#) and [WXXI News](#).

More Information: To learn more, please contact Dr. Elizabeth Meeker at emeeker@ccsi.org

