



Investing in Prevention: Building a Better Future for Children



Children represent the future generation, underscoring the importance of prioritizing substantial and fair investments in primary prevention programs that cater to children and families at both local and state levels. By allocating resources to these initiatives, families and children throughout Illinois can access the necessary support. This primary prevention approach aims to mitigate the adversities faced by children, fostering an environment conducive to their growth and enabling them to mature into content and robust adults.

The ***Investing in Prevention Campaign*** was created out of an identified need for more education and awareness on the impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and promoting positive childhood experiences (PCEs). Through the campaign, Prevent Child Abuse Illinois hopes to build partnerships with elected officials, local and state business leaders, and communities by providing education and resources on primary prevention policies.



WHAT ARE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?

Adverse Childhood Experiences

(ACEs) are traumas that happen in a child's life that hurts or scares them. When a child experiences trauma over a long period of time it is even more harmful to their growing body and brain and can lead to toxic stress and other negative, long-term effects on their physical and mental health.

The good news is there are many ways to buffer the effects of ACEs so that children grow up healthy and strong! Research has shown that **building resilience, having protective factors in place, and creating positive childhood experiences (PCEs)** can reduce the physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral effects of ACEs—in some cases by nearly 50%.



* The child lives with a parent, caregiver, or other adult who experiences one or more of these challenges.



THE SCIENCE OF HOW BRAINS ARE BUILT

Brains are built over time, from the ground up. Connections begin forming before birth and continue into adulthood through experiences. Negative experiences early in life can impair the way a brain is built and have detrimental effects that last into adulthood. Think of it like building a house. If you don't build a strong foundation, it compromises the strength and quality of the house.

The early years in a child's life are **critical** to healthy brain development. Every experience creates a connection in the brain - literally millions during the early years of life. The more positive experiences the child has in their early years, the more likely they will be to have strong connections as they grow up.

Science is telling us that when these connections are disrupted by adverse experiences, it can change the way the brain develops - which can lead to learning disabilities, lack of self-control, and lifelong physical diseases such as heart disease and cancer. This not only has an impact on the child, but can impact the family and community they live in.

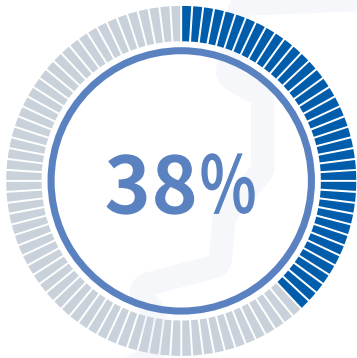
“The fact that the brain develops sequentially - and also so rapidly in the first years of life - explains why extremely young children are at such great risk of suffering lasting effects of trauma: their brains are still developing.”

Dr. Bruce Perry



THE IMPACT OF ACES IN

Illinois



of children in Illinois
has experienced **1** or
more ACEs



of children in Illinois
has experienced **2** or
more ACEs



\$640,902,000 is the
economic burden spent
annually in Illinois among
adults by health
conditions



WHAT ARE POSITIVE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES?



Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) can protect children from the immediate and long-term negative effects of ACEs. PCEs help create environments where children feel connected and supported by their peers, community and adults in their lives.

Positive childhood experiences have the potential to **positively impact the economy**. Preventing adverse childhood experiences from occurring in the first place could have economic benefits and reduce the strain on healthcare, child welfare, and mental health systems. A mere **10% decrease** in ACEs could lead to savings of **\$56 billion** each year in the United States.

15% **REDUCTION** in the number of adults who are **UNEMPLOYED**.

33% **REDUCTION** in the number of adults who **SMOKE**.

44% **REDUCTION** in the number of adults with **DEPRESSION**.



INVESTING IN PRIMARY PREVENTION POLICIES

While the science of ACEs is guiding us in the work to mitigate and eliminate childhood adversity, the data is also showing us investing in **primary prevention policies** is also effective at reducing adversity in childhood. Primary prevention policies that support children and families is critical for the healthy development of children. According to the Center for Disease Control, there are several strategies to achieve this.



Economic Supports

Advancing policies that strengthen family financial security and establish greater household stability help to create the conditions for children, families, and communities to thrive. Economic support for families is instrumental in lowering familial stress which is linked to child abuse and neglect. Policies include **expanding the child tax credit**, **increased child care subsidies**, **affordable housing**, and **paid family leave**.



Family Supports

Research shows that a range of coordinated evidence-based programs work together to produce better outcomes for children and their families. These include early childhood interventions such as **Early Head Start**, **home visiting services**, **promoting positive parenting**, and **quality child care**. Evidence-based home visiting has been shown to prevent child abuse and neglect.



Early Childhood Supports

Creating a system of coordinated prevention, support, and services can ensure that families have what they need, when they need it, in their own communities. These coordinated supports can prevent child abuse and neglect and include policies and programs such as **Early Intervention**, **child care subsidies**, **after school programs**, and **expanded support for families impacted by substance use and mental health issues**.