

Topic: Build child, family and community relationships that promote child development and learning.

McKelvey, L. M., Whiteside-Mansell, L., Conners-Burrow, N. A., Swindle, T., & Fitzgerald, S. (2016). Assessing adverse experiences from infancy through early childhood in home visiting programs. *Child Abuse & Neglect, 51*, 295-302.

Context

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs; e.g., child abuse) can lead to psychosocial problems in adulthood such as depression, anxiety, suicide, and aggression and risky health-related behaviors like smoking and abuse of alcohol and drugs (Anda et al., 2006; Felitti et al., 1998). Because of the evidence of such consequences of ACEs on children, there is a need to assess family situations to aid early intervention efforts.

Purpose of Article

The three aims of this study included assessing the exposure of children ages birth to 5 years to adverse experiences, investigating parenting beliefs and behaviors that are associated with ACEs, and determining whether ACEs negatively impact child psychosocial well-being (social-emotional development).

Methods

This study used data collected during home visits to 1,282 families through Family Map Inventories (FMI; Whiteside-Mansell, Bradley, Conners, & Bokony, 2007, 2013) to assess important aspects of family and home environment associated with well-being in birth to 5-year old children; the Adult-Adolescent Parenting Inventory (AAPI-2; Bavolek & Keene, 2001) to measure parenting beliefs associated with abusive/neglectful parenting; and the Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional (ASQ:SE; Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2002) to screen for children's social-emotional behavior problems.

Results

Findings revealed that more than 40% of children in this study had been exposed to multiple ACEs at an early age (e.g., physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect). While having social-emotional scores in the problem

range was highest for children exposed to four or more FMI-ACEs, ASQ:SE results indicated that exposure to any ACE negatively impacted child behavioral outcomes. Parental warmth was negatively associated with ACE scores. In other words, children who were exposed to adverse childhood experiences were less likely to have parents who showed warmth.

Discussion

This research underlines the need for assessing adverse childhood experiences early on to provide needed support for children and families and to find ways to assess that are family-friendly and focus on increasing family strengths. The study indicated how the FMI, an existing family assessment tool, can be used to capture information about ACEs in very young children and to link the prevalence of ACEs to parenting beliefs and behaviors associated with child abuse and neglect. Also, the authors provided evidence which, although not causal, suggests that the impact of ACEs may be seen very early in development.

How to Use This Article

For Instructors and Practitioners

Although this article highlights the importance of teachers assessing the extent of adverse childhood experiences early on, it does not address specific strategies for fostering healthy social and emotional development in children who have experienced trauma. It is suggested that this brief should be paired with sources such as another ACCEPT Project research-to-practice brief: Perry & Conners-Burrow, 2016, [ARPB-2017-01] and the research synthesis: *Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation and Infant Mental Health and Early Care and Education Providers* found at [The Center on the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning \(CSEFEL\) website at Research Syntheses](#).

References

- Anda, R. F., Felitti, V. J., Bremner, J. D., Walker, J. D., Whitfield, C. H., Perry, B. D., Dube, S. R., & Giles, W. H. (2006). The enduring effects of abuse and related adverse experiences in childhood. *European Archives of Psychiatry and Clinical Neuroscience*, 256, 174-186.
- Bavolek, S., & Keene, R. G. (2001). *Adult Adolescent Parenting Inventory – version 2: Administration and development handbook*. Park City, UT: Family Development Resources, Inc.
- Felitti, V. J., Anda, R. F., Nordenberg, D., Williamson, D. F., Spitz, A. M., Edwards, V., Koss, M. P., & Marks, J. S. (1998). Relationship of childhood abuse and household dysfunction to many of the leading causes of death in adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 14, 245-258.
- Squires, J., Bricker, D., & Twombly, E. (2002). *Ages & Stages Questionnaires: Social-Emotional – A parent completed, child-monitoring system for social-emotional behaviors*. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Bradley, R. H., Conners, N. A., & Bokony, P. A. (2007). The Family Map: Structured interview to identify risks and strengths in Head Start families. *NHSA Dialog: A Research-to-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field*, 10, 189-209.
- Whiteside-Mansell, L., Johnson, D., Bokony, P., McKelvey, L. M., Burrow, N., & Swindle, T. (2013). Using the Family Map: Supporting family engagement with parents of infants and toddlers. *NHSA Dialog: A Research-to-Practice Journal for the Early Intervention Field*, 16, 20-44.

About Research-to-Practice Briefs

Research-to-Practice Briefs provide summaries of key studies that inform practice related to early childhood special education. The series is designed specifically to support community college faculty who prepare candidates to work with children with special needs in the early childhood setting.

About the ACCEPT Project

The ACCEPT (Advancing Community College Efforts in Paraprofessional Training) Project is a federally-funded cooperative agreement between the U. S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte College of Education. The focus of this effort is the inclusion of special education content in the coursework and experiences provided within the associate degree program in early childhood education at targeted state-supported community colleges in North Carolina.

Contact the ACCEPT Project

p: 704-687-8859

f: 704-687-3493

e: info@acceptproject.org

w: www.acceptproject.org