



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

FICTION

Punishment alone should be enough to deter delinquent behavior by youth.

FACTS

The behavior and actions of most youth in the juvenile justice system in New Mexico have been impacted by negative experiences outside of their control. Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are associated with elevated juvenile justice system contact. [1]

NEW MEXICO RESEARCH

A New Mexico study of juvenile offenders committed for incarceration in 2011 found that 86% of those juveniles had experienced 4 or more adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Faculty from the University of New Mexico (UNM) School of Law and the UNM School of Medicine, and New Mexico's Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD) initiated a joint project to look at the prevalence of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) nationally and in New Mexico. The study was intended to better establish the association between early childhood trauma and delinquency, as well as to explore the role that law and medicine can play in ensuring better health and juvenile justice outcomes for children who have experienced ACEs. [2]

Adverse childhood experiences were grouped into either childhood abuse or household dysfunction and were formulated as 10 childhood experiences identified as risk factors for chronic disease in adulthood: emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, violent treatment towards mother, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, and having an incarcerated household member. [3]

The 2016 study included all 220 juvenile offenders committed for incarceration in New Mexico during 2011 and used the results of comprehensive multi-disciplinary psychosocial assessments to examine juveniles' ACEs, psychological and family conditions, and exposure to other traumatic events. 86% of incarcerated New Mexico juveniles experienced 4+ ACEs. New Mexico juveniles experienced ACEs at a higher rate than juvenile offender populations in other studies. [4]

Social conditions in Bernalillo County

Social conditions in Bernalillo County, such as an increase in substance abuse disorders, a high rate of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs), poor education outcomes, and high rates of poverty can contribute to high rates of crime. **In New Mexico, the percentage of the population with two or more ACEs is 27.30%, which is significantly higher than the percentage of the U.S. population, 17.40%.** [5]

Efforts are needed to identify and prevent

Efforts are needed to identify and prevent early childhood trauma in New Mexico. Intervention goals include preventing additional ACEs in young children who have experienced them and trauma screening when children enter the juvenile justice system. Additionally, evidence-based, trauma-informed, family-engaged mental health and substance-abuse treatments should be available throughout the juvenile justice system and to youth subsequent to discharge from detention and incarceration. [6]



Children's Code Reform Task Force

Undertaking Thoughtful Reform

Legislative Resource

One-Page Info Sheet
(Both sides)

FOOTNOTES

[1] *Adverse Childhood Experiences and Justice System Contact: A Systemic Review*, (2021)

<https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/147/1/e2020021030/77102/Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-and-Justice-System?autologincheck=redirected>

[2] *Adverse Childhood Experiences in the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Population*, Yael Cannon, JD, George Davis, MD, Andrew Hsi, MD and MPH, Alexandra Bochte, JD, in Collaboration with the New Mexico Sentencing Commission, p.1 (2016)

<https://nmssc.unm.edu/reports/2016/adverse-childhood-experiences-in-the-new-mexico-juvenile-justice-population.pdf>

[3] Id.

[4] Id.

[5] *Update on Crime in New Mexico and Bernalillo County*, New Mexico Legislative Finance Committee, p. 13 (July 15, 2024)

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/CCJ%20081224%20Item%204%20BernCo%20Crime%20Update.pdf>

[6] *Adverse Childhood Experiences in the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Population*, Yael Cannon, JD, George Davis, MD, Andrew Hsi, MD and MPH, Alexandra Bochte, JD, in Collaboration with the New Mexico Sentencing Commission, p.1 (2016), See fn 1.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

1. *Disposable Children: The Prevalence of Child Abuse and Trauma Among Children Prosecuted and Incarcerated as Adults in Maryland*, Human Rights for Kids (2024)

https://assets.aecf.org/m/resourcedoc/Report_disposablechildren_2024.pdf

2. *Missing Pieces*, a 17-minute interview of Dr. George Davis, CYFD's former director of psychiatry, discussing what some describe as "a largely-ignored blueprint" in the effort to find the "Missing Pieces" of the juvenile justice system in NM (December 2024)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8grTcghqVs&ab_channel=KOB4

3. *At New Mexico's biggest jail for children, toilets and staff are lacking – but strip searches are common*, (2023)

<https://searchlightnm.org/at-new-mexicos-biggest-jail-for-children-toilets-and-staff-are-lacking-but-strip-searches-are-common/>

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