**What are ACEs? Crow Wing Energized offers ACEs Presentations**

By Tracy Wallin, Crow Wing Energized

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events that a young person may experience before the age of 18. ACEs include various forms of abuse, neglect, and a range of household adversities witnessed by the child, such as mental health issues, substance misuse, or domestic violence. ACEs also encompass aspects of a child’s environment that can undermine their sense of safety, stability, and emotional bonding.

ACEs are common, and by the age of 18, most individuals will experience at least one ACE. These experiences tend to be interrelated and often occur in clusters. The more ACEs an individual faces, the higher the likelihood that they will develop health problems such as substance misuse, type 2 diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular issues, and depression. The health effects of ACEs can emerge in childhood or develop into adulthood.

**ACEs in Crow Wing County**

ACEs data were collected from the 2022 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) of 8th, 9th, and 11th graders in Crow Wing County. MSS ACEs scores are calculated by adding the number of adverse experiences reported by each student from the following list. The percentages below represent the Crow Wing County average compared to the state average.

* Living with someone who is depressed or has mental health issues - 35% vs. 29%
* Having a parent/guardian who is currently in jail, and/or has been in jail - 26% vs. 16%
* Verbal abuse by a parent or adult in the household - 17% vs. 14%
* Living with someone who drinks too much alcohol - 15% vs. 10%
* Physical abuse by a parent or adult in the household - 13% vs. 11%
* Sexual abuse by a family member and/or a person outside the family - 9% vs. 8%
* Witnessing domestic abuse of parents/adults in household - 9% vs. 6%
* Living with someone who uses illegal drugs or abuses prescription drugs - 7% vs. 4%

Here is a summary of the data collected:

* Of the 1,037 Crow Wing County 8th, 9th, and 11th graders, 56% reported experiencing at least one ACE, compared to the state average of 47%. (ACEs are common.)
* Crow Wing County’s prevalence of each ACE is higher than the state average.
* About half of adolescents experiencing any ACEs report more than one. (ACEs tend to cluster.)
* Of students with 0 ACEs, 5% reported having thoughts of suicide in the past year, compared to 50% of students with 4+ ACEs; students with 4+ ACEs are 10 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts.
* Students with 4+ ACEs are 4.6 times more likely to report feeling down, depressed, or hopeless in the past 2 weeks (67% of those with 4+ ACEs versus 15% of those with 0 ACEs).

The consequences of ACEs can be passed down from one generation to the next if children lack protective buffers, such as positive childhood experiences or a caring adult in their lives. Additionally, when families experience historical and systemic racism or live in poverty for generations, the effects of ACEs can accumulate over time. However, ACEs are not destiny, and certain protective factors can help buffer against negative outcomes. The science of ACEs also reveals opportunities to improve the lives of all children and adults through Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs). Like ACEs, PCEs are powerful and cumulative: the more protective factors a person has, the better they are able to withstand the effects of ACEs.

**ACEs Presentation Jan. 13 in Pequot Lakes**

ACEs significantly affect health, leading to long-term issues like mental health disorders and chronic diseases. The discussion will provide insights into how childhood trauma can alter brain development, resulting in emotional and cognitive challenges.

Preventing ACEs requires understanding and addressing the factors that put individuals at risk. Creating safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments for all children helps prevent ACEs and allows children reach their full potential. These relationships and environments are essential to fostering positive childhood experiences. Join us to learn more.

An ACEs Presentation by Wendy Gammello and Pat Scott is scheduled from 5:00 - 6:30 p.m. on Monday, January 13, at the Pequot Lakes Community Library. The presentation is free to attend, but registration is required. Sign up at crowwingenergized.org/event.

If you would like to schedule an ACEs presentation for your group or organization, contact Crow Wing Energized at CrowWingEnergized@EssentiaHealth.org.

Sources: https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/aces-infographic/assets/pdf/ACEs-Infographic-Narrative\_508.pdf;

https://familywiseservices.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Minnesota-ACEs-Fact-Sheet-2023.pdf

Crow Wing Energized was founded with the mission to “Improve health and wellness in our community by making the healthy choice the easy choice.” We know this is best accomplished when we work together to improve our communities, which is why we also recognize the works of other organizations and programs in our Midweek Motivator article. We want to connect readers to services, events, organizations, and resources that promote healthy living as well as healthy and productive workplaces. If you are interested in learning more about Crow Wing Energized and our upcoming classes and events visit CrowWingEnergized.org. You can also stay updated by following Crow Wing Energized on Facebook and Instagram.