

# The Case for ACEs Prevention



## Resilient Georgia is dedicated to healing adversity and promoting resiliency in children and families.

We do this through the prevention and early intervention of ACEs and by sharing best practices. We all have a role to play in providing better futures for children.

### What are ACEs?

**Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)** are traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on the health and well-being of children now and in the future.<sup>1</sup>

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Caregiver mental illness
- Household dysfunction
- Communal violence
- Experienced racism
- Pervasive poverty
- Inability to access needed social services

## ACEs can be passed from one generation of Georgians to the next.

Many children who experience ACEs have a parent or caregiver who has also experienced ACEs. Limited parenting skills and toxic environments get passed down from parent to child, and so it continues—a cycle of intergenerational trauma.

### ACEs are common.

3 in 5 adults in Georgia have experienced at least one ACE.<sup>3</sup>

## ACEs affect development.

Persistent exposure to one or more ACEs as a child or adolescent can cause prolonged activation of the body's stress response, which triggers toxic stress. Toxic stress, when not properly addressed and reduced, can dramatically change how the brain develops and can lead to many learning and behavioral issues as a child, as well as many common life-threatening health conditions as an adult.<sup>2</sup>

# Early Intervention is More Effective and Less Expensive

Funding policies and programs that prevent ACEs by enabling positive conditions for early childhood and supporting families at risk as early as possible are more effective and less expensive than attempting to address the consequences of adversity later.

***The estimated lifetime costs associated with new child maltreatment cases in 2025 is \$206.8 billion.<sup>4 6</sup>***

A CDC study concluded that compared with other health problems, **the economic burden of child maltreatment is substantial, underscoring the importance of ACEs prevention efforts.<sup>5</sup>**

**\$138 Billion**  
Lost-Productivity

**\$31 Billion**  
Healthcare

**\$7.6 Billion**  
Special Education

**\$7.4 Billion**  
Child Welfare

**\$6.4 Billion<sup>4 6</sup>**  
Criminal Justice

<sup>1</sup> Felitti V.J., Anda R.F. et al (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(4), 245-258.

<sup>2</sup> National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2005/2014). Excessive Stress Disrupts the Architecture of the Developing Brain: Working Paper No.3. Updated Edition. Retrieved from [Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University](#).

<sup>3</sup> Davis V.N., Bayakly A.R., Chosewood D & Drenzek C. 2018 Data Summary: Adverse Childhood Experiences. Georgia Department of Public Health, Epidemiology Section, Chronic Disease, Healthy Behaviors, & Injury Epidemiology Unit. Retrieved from [Georgia Essentials for Childhood GA ACEs Data Factsheet](#).

<sup>4</sup> CDC Publication (Fang X, Brown D, Florence C & Mercy J, 2012) with estimates in 2010 dollars; converted to 2025 dollars using \$1.47 inflation factor <sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Fang X, Brown D, Florence C & Mercy J (2012). The Economic Burden of Child Maltreatment in the United States and Implications for Prevention. *Child abuse & neglect*. 36, 156-65. [10.1016/j.chiabu.2011.10.006](#).

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. (n.d.) [CPI inflation calculator](#). US Department of Labor.

# Mental and Behavioral Health: A National Emergency



The mental and behavioral health crisis has intensified, marked by rising distress, record-high suicide rates, and a critical gap in access to care across all age groups.

**Mental health ED visits among youth doubled from 2011 to 2020, with a fivefold rise in suicide-related symptoms. This highlights the urgent need for expanded emergency and crisis services.<sup>7</sup>**

**New data shows that Americans are suffering from record levels of mental anguish.**

Suicide is now the **second leading** cause of death for youth ages 10-24.<sup>8</sup>

**Over half** of Americans with a mental illness receive no treatment at all.<sup>9</sup>

**1 in 3** U.S. adults reports symptoms of anxiety or depression - the highest rate ever recorded.<sup>10</sup>

## How You Can Help Build Resilience Now

***Prevention remains a powerful and cost-effective strategy that addresses root causes of mental health challenges, reduces crisis-level care, and builds long-term resilience in individuals and communities.<sup>11</sup>***



Too often, behavioral health prevention attracts scarce attention and few resources. However, high-quality prevention and early intervention programs for mental and substance use disorders, such as school-based mental well-being efforts, can yield **returns on investment as high as \$80 per \$1 invested.**<sup>12</sup>

***Do something today. Now is the time to invest in prevention. By acting quickly our communities will be safer, more resilient, and proactive rather than reactive.***

- Visit **[ResilientGA.org](https://ResilientGA.org)**.
- View our free **[Trauma Informed Training Roadmap](#)** and low-cost training resources.
- Coordinate a training for your organization.
- Help fund our partners and enable them to offer more training opportunities to the public at low or no cost.
- Contact us at any time with questions at **[info@resilientga.org](mailto:info@resilientga.org)**.

<sup>7</sup> Source: National Trends in Mental Health-Related Emergency Department Visits Among Youth, 2011-2020; JAMA. 2023

<sup>8</sup> National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). [Suicide Statistics](#).

<sup>9</sup> Mental Health America. (2024). [The State of Mental Health in America 2024](#).

<sup>10</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). Household Pulse Survey: Mental health indicators. National Center for Health Statistics. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/covid19/hulse/mental-health.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Source: National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine - Report on Preventive Interventions (April 2025)

<sup>12</sup> McDaid D, Park A, & Wahlbeck K. "The economic case for the prevention of mental illness," [Annual Review of Public Health, 2019, Volume 40, #1, 373-89](#); and converted to 2025 dollars using \$1.47 inflation rate with [US Bureau of Labor Statistics calculator](#).