

## ACEs in young children involved in the child welfare system

Pamela A. Clarkson Freeman at the University of Maryland used a nationally representative longitudinal sample of children engaged in the child welfare system to study the prevalence of ACEs in the population and the relationship between early childhood ACEs and child behavior.

The study was published in 2014 in the *Infant Mental Health Journal* and can be found here:

<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/imhj.21460/abstract>

Consider the prevalence findings:

- 42% of the children studied experienced four or more ACEs
- 27.08% experienced three ACEs

The sample of children also showed strong associations between ACEs, particularly related to psychological abuse:

- “Psychological abuse was strongly related to other indicators of abuse, with 95.00% of children experiencing both psychological and physical abuse, 99.26% experiencing both psychological and sexual abuse, and 93.48% experiencing both psychological abuse and neglect.”
- Also, physical abuse was related to caregiver domestic violence. Over half of the children had both adversities.
- Sexual abuse was associated with caregiver mental health problems. Over half of the children had both adversities.
- Neglect was related to the majority of the indicators for household dysfunction.

Regarding the relationship of ACEs to child behavior, this study found the following:

- “Specifically, children with three ACEs were 4.7 times more likely than were children with no ACEs to experience internalizing problems at 59 to 97 months’ postinvestigation, and children with four or more ACEs were 4.87 times more likely to experience internalizing problems.”
- Children with four or more ACEs were also more likely to show externalizing behavior than children without adverse childhood experiences.