



In Virginia,  
**1 in 5 children**  
has experienced  
2 or more ACEs.

- KidsCount 2011-2012

# ACEs, Stress and Children

## *What are Adverse Childhood Experiences?*

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic childhood events, such as abuse and neglect, parental divorce, domestic violence and parental mental illness.

### **Why do ACEs matter?**

Experiencing an ACE, like abuse and neglect, can actually increase the odds of developing serious adult health issues like cancer, liver disease and heart disease. ACEs can also make people more prone to suicide, substance abuse, poor work performance and a host of other negative outcomes.

The impacts of these early traumas add up. Almost 1 out of every 5 children in Virginia has experienced 2 or more adverse childhood experiences in their young lives. Even infants exposed to domestic abuse and parental conflict are at risk.

Children who have been abused and neglected are:

**12x** more likely to commit suicide, **7x** more likely to be alcoholic, **10x** more likely to inject drugs

### **What can I do to protect my child from negative early experiences?**

Children can heal if they have safe, stable nurturing supports. Even if a child has experienced early traumatic or chaotic experiences, accessing resources and getting support can help reduce further negative consequences over the child's lifetime. As parents, it's our job to try and protect children from negative early experiences:

- Recognize a traumatic event when it happens to your child
- Be aware of the traumatic or challenging events you experienced and how those are affecting the way you parent
- Surround yourself and your child with other loving and supportive adults
- Access resources that will help you respond to your and your child's experiences

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Building hope for children & families  
in Northern Virginia



**ALLIES IN PREVENTION  
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An initiative of SCAN of Northern Virginia

**Parenting Can Be Tough**  
*Asking for help doesn't have to be!*

Find more resources online at [scanva.org/prc](http://scanva.org/prc)