

MEADOWS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
POLICY INSTITUTE



THE HACKETT CENTER  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH

---

## **COVID-19's Impact on Children**

Gary Blau, PhD. | August 4, 2020

---



# Vision, Mission, Core Change Strategy: “Putting Policy Into Practice”

---

The Hackett Center for Mental Health, established in 2018, is the first regional center of The Meadows Mental Health Policy Institute.

## Vision

We envision Texas to be the national leader in treating people with mental health needs.

## Mission Statement

To provide independent, non-partisan, data-driven, and trusted policy and program guidance that creates systemic changes so all Texans can obtain effective, efficient behavioral health care when and where they need it.





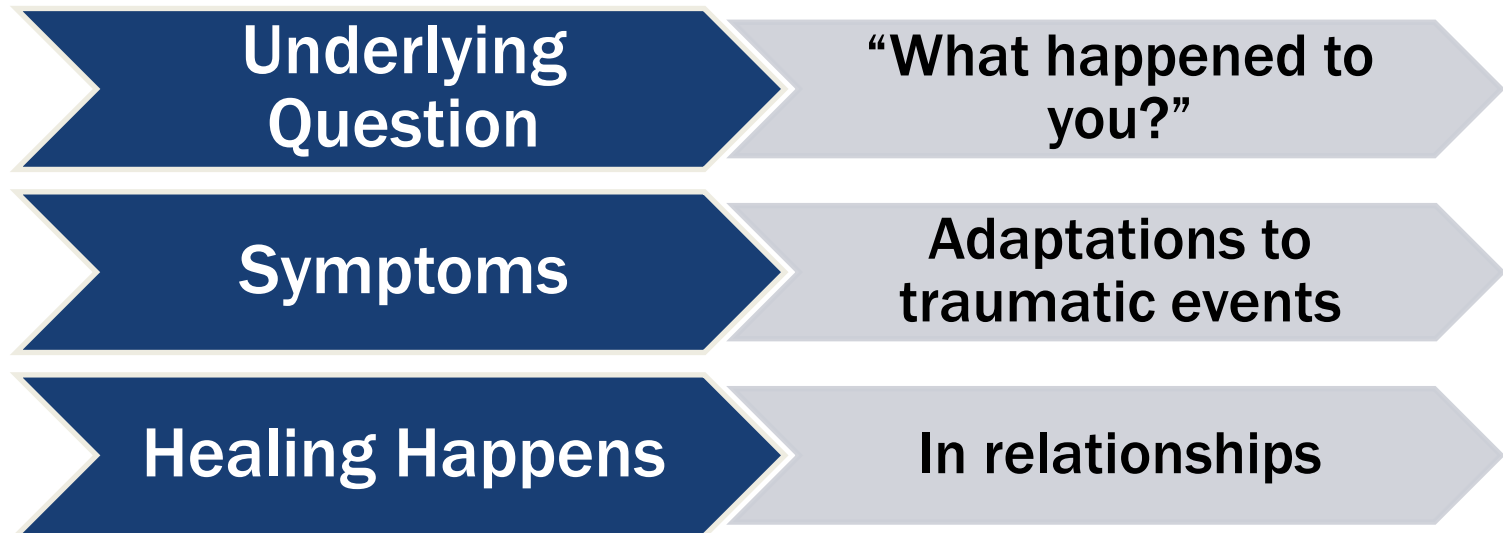
# **COVID-19'S EFFECT ON CHILDREN'S MENTAL HEALTH**



# What is Trauma?

---

Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by a person as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening, and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the person's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.





# Three E's in Trauma

---

Events

*Events* or  
circumstances  
cause trauma

Experience

An individual's  
*experience* of the  
event determines  
whether it is  
traumatic

Effects

*Effects* of trauma  
include adverse  
physical, social,  
emotional, or spiritual  
consequences



# Signs of Trauma Responses

## Behavioral

- Blowing up
- Fighting
- Resisting transitions or change
- Very protective of personal space
- Reckless or self-destructive behavior
- Frequently seeking attention
- Reverting to younger behaviors

## Emotional/ Physical

- Nightmares or sleeping problems
- Sensitive to noise or to being touched
- Fear of being separated from family
- Difficulty trusting others
- Feeling very sad, angry, afraid
- Emotional swings
- Unexplained medical problems

## Psychological

- Confusing what is safe and what is dangerous
- Trouble focusing or concentrating
- Difficulty imagining the future

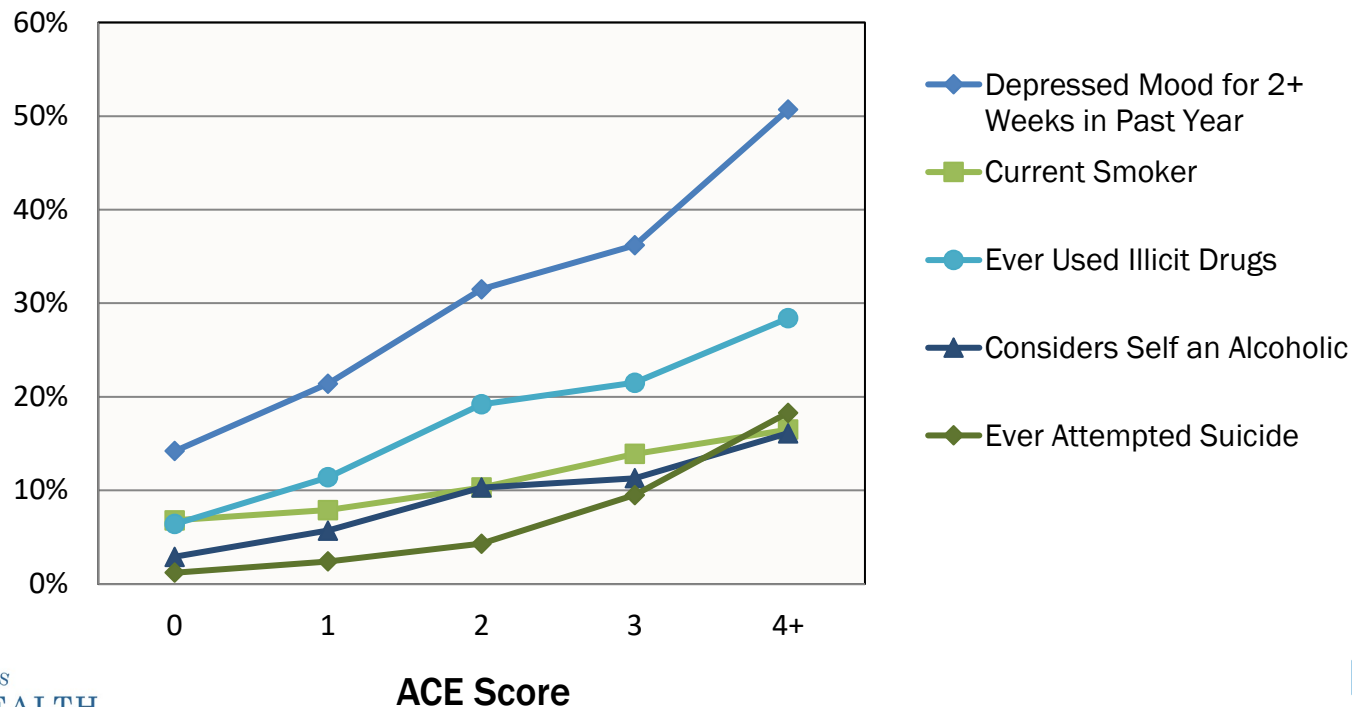


# Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

The study examined health outcomes of over 17,000 Kaiser members in relation to events in their childhood.

Adults who reported **multiple adverse experiences** in childhood were much more **likely** to suffer a range of **negative mental health, health and social outcomes in adulthood**, including heart disease, lung disease, and suicide.

ACEs and Negative Outcomes





# Effects of COVID-19 on Children

---

## Short-Term Effects

- Feelings of isolation, irritability, anxiety, insomnia
- Education and nutrition losses
- “Crisis schooling” stress at home for parents and children
- Lack of access to school-based mental health services
- Decrease in reported child abuse cases
- “Pent up demand” when schools reopen

## Long-Term Effects

- Trauma-related mental health diagnoses
- Widening education gap
- Increased child poverty



# Bottom Line

---

“Kids that are Too Sad or Too Mad Can’t Add”

-Larke Huang, Ph.D.



**ACEs affect:** All children and youth, and are more prevalent for children of color, children living in poverty, families with lower education / less employment, and LGBT status.



# Policy Options

---

- Capacity and Access: Telehealth
- Physical and Mental Health Care Integration: Collaborative Care
- Evidence-Based Practices
- Measurement Based Care
- Health Equity



MEADOWS  
MENTAL HEALTH  
POLICY INSTITUTE



THE HACKETT CENTER  
FOR MENTAL HEALTH



@GaryBlauPHD  
@HackettCenter



*The truth is: mental illness affects more people than you may think, and we need to talk about it. It's Okay to Say...* [okaytosay.org](http://okaytosay.org)