

Understanding the Impact of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on Children at the Boys and Girls Club of Tippecanoe County, Indiana

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Background/Objective:

Children with multiple Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) have been shown to be at greater risk for chronic health conditions. Providing Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) to children with ACEs has been linked to better downstream health outcomes. Out-of-school time (OST) programs, such as Boys and Girls Clubs (BGC), can play an important role in supporting children with ACEs. Currently, BGC of Tippecanoe County does not require staff or volunteers to participate in training on ACEs or TIC. This study aims to determine the number of ACEs that children at BGC experience, and subsequently if training for staff and volunteers should be required.

Methods:

An anonymous survey was developed using a template from ACEs Aware. The survey included ten ACEs questions and nine Related Life Events questions (considered additional ACEs in this study). An optional demographics section was also included. Caregivers of children at BGC were asked to participate. Staff and volunteers were also surveyed regarding their history of training in TIC.

Results:

A total of 64 surveys were distributed to parents and 52 were completed (81.3% response rate). Of the completed surveys, the mean number of ACEs experienced per child was 4.6, the median was 3, and the mode was 2. The maximum number of ACEs experienced by a child was 14. Fifty percent of the staff and volunteers surveyed (n = 18) had no formal TIC training. Further data analysis is still in progress.

Conclusion and Potential Impact:

Children who attend BGC may experience on average a higher number of ACEs than the general population. Requiring training on ACEs and TIC for staff and volunteers may help better identify and respond to child behaviors linked to ACEs. Helping children feel safe and empowered through TIC provided at OST programs may have a positive impact on their physical and social health.