

Connection between adverse childhood experiences and juvenile delinquency

April 1 2016, by Tamara Williams

A recent study co-authored by University of New Mexico School of Law Associate Professor Yael Zakai Cannon shows the relationship between "adverse childhood experiences," or ACEs, and juvenile delinquency. The study also sheds light on the role that law and medicine can play in improving outcomes for children with adverse experiences.

For "Adverse Childhood Experiences in the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Population," recently published by the New Mexico Sentencing Commission, Cannon also collaborated with faculty from the UNM School of Medicine and the New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department.

Cannon co-authored the study with George Davis, New Mexico Children, Youth and Families Department director of Psychiatric Services, Law School alumna Alexandra Bochte and Andrew Hsi, UNM School of Medicine professor and director of the UNM Health Sciences Institute for Resilience Health and Justice. Hsi says the study was developed "from one of the most thorough and rigorous review of criminal justice, social services, educational, mental health, and medical records done on incarcerated youth."

The study found that the youth committed to New Mexico's [juvenile justice](#) facilities suffered high numbers of adverse [childhood experiences](#) (known as ACEs) and other forms of [trauma](#) preceding incarceration.

"They had profound rates of mental illness and substance use disorders as the outcomes from the trauma and toxic stress in their lives," Hsi says. "The findings carry implications for life long poor health and justice outcomes unless systems of legal, social, educational, health, and vocational support become accessible and organized when these youth return to society. Our statewide systems also need to look to prevention models to interrupt the path from [childhood trauma](#) to delinquency."

Cannon and two of her co-authors were interviewed on the New Mexico PBS program Public Square in an episode titled "[Children, Trauma and Resiliency](#)" on Feb. 25. The program discussed adverse childhood experiences in New Mexico and examined how the community is coming to better understand the impact of childhood trauma and providing resources to cope with the problem.

More information: Adverse Childhood Experiences in the New Mexico Juvenile Justice Population. nmsc.unm.edu/reports/2016/adverse-justice-population.pdf

Provided by University of New Mexico

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