

Research highlights need for increased trauma-informed care in children

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The high prevalence of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) in youth is an unaddressed public health threat, requiring a call to action for trauma-informed care—an approach that recognizes the biological, neurological, physiological, psychological, and psychosocial effects of trauma on the self, according to a new study published in the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*.

While there is a generalization that ACEs are physical and [sexual abuse](#), there are many other factors that can create an adverse childhood experience, including bereavement, bullying, community and domestic violence, forced displacement, medical trauma, unsafe environments, neglect, racism over time, traumatic loss and war.

The study states that trauma-informed care is the steppingstone required to build action steps for health ACEs, especially related to public health implications nationwide.

"General principles of trauma-informed care include assessing for social connectedness, [support systems](#), and encouraging the use of family, friends, spiritual and community resources," said Anna Goddard, Ph.D., APRN, CPNP-PC, author of this study. "Responding involves knowing the health care and educational systems for referrals and participate in coordination as part of trauma-based care."

The impact of trauma on child development leads to long-term consequences which include disease and disability (major depression, suicide, PTSD, drug and alcohol abuse, [cardiovascular disease](#), cancer, [chronic lung disease](#), sexually transmitted diseases, intergenerational transmission of abuse), social problems (homelessness, prostitution, criminal behavior, unemployment, parenting problems), and shortened life span. Understanding how trauma specifically affects the body can aid in comprehending subsequent physical manifestations and long-term chronic health conditions related to ACEs.

The researcher's call for a proactive, preventative approach to childhood trauma includes a call to action for pediatric clinicians to recognize the tangible effects on development across the lifetime.

"Pediatric health clinicians must continue to bridge the gap, with emphasis placed on the integration of the medical and mental health

disciplines," said Goddard.

The research was published in the March/April 2021 edition of the *Journal of Pediatric Health Care*.

More information: Anna Goddard. Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma-Informed Care, *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* (2020).

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