

# Scaling Up Home Visiting in Wisconsin: A Two-Generation Strategy to Address Trauma

Joshua Mersky, Ph.D.

Institute for Child & Family Well-being

Helen Bader School of Social Welfare, UW-Milwaukee

<http://uwm.edu/icfw/>

January 30, 2019

# Trauma is a Major Public Health Problem

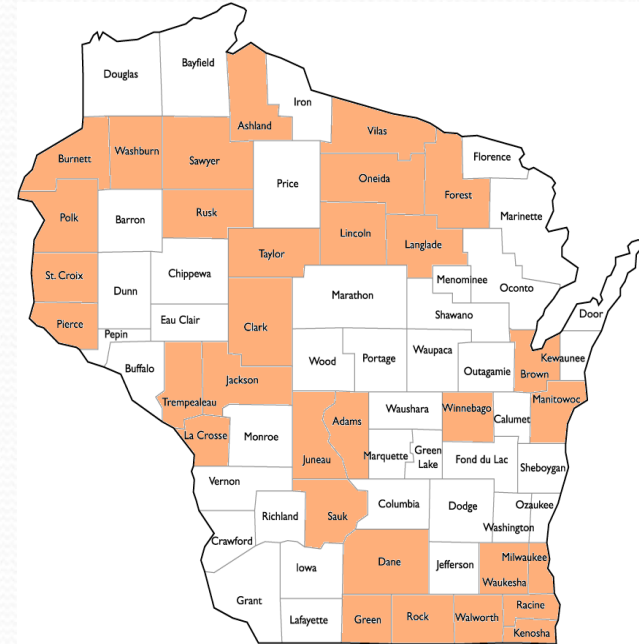
- Over 60% of American adults have had at least one **adverse childhood experience** (ACE) such as child abuse & neglect, domestic violence, and parental substance use
- ACEs are a major source of **toxic stress** that increase the risk of disease, including heart disease, stroke, and cancer
- ACEs also increase the risk of mental illness, substance abuse, low educational attainment, and unemployment

# Childhood Experiences Survey

- Assesses 10 ACEs, including 5 forms of child maltreatment and 5 forms of household dysfunction
- The CES also measures other sources of toxic stress:
  - Extreme poverty & homelessness
  - Prolonged parental absence & parent/sibling death
  - Bullying & Violent crime

# Family Foundations Home Visiting (FFHV)

- Wisconsin's FFHV program is a partnership between the Dept. of Children & Families and the Dept. of Health Services
  - Supports evidence-based home visiting
  - Funded through the federal MIECHV program plus state TANF and GPR
  - 96% of FFHV participants eligible for means-tested benefits or below 200% of poverty line





# Prevalence of ACEs in the FFHV Program

ACEs in Mothers	%
Physical abuse	39.8
Sexual abuse	26.4
Emotional abuse	28.2
Physical neglect	12.2
Emotional neglect	18.0
Substance abuse	50.4
Mental illness	43.7
Domestic violence	36.6
Incarceration/Jail	37.9
Divorce/separation	43.8

\*85% of mothers in the FFHV program reported at least 1 ACE

\*68% reported 2 or more ACEs

# Trauma Is Not Equally Distributed

	Prevalence	
	FFHV Program	WI Population <sup>1</sup>
4+ ACEs	43%	14%

<sup>1</sup>Child Abuse and Neglect Prevention Board. (2018). *Adverse childhood experiences in Wisconsin: 2011-2015 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey findings*. Madison, WI: Author.

# Other Sources of Toxic Stress

<b>Adverse Experience</b>	<b>FFHV Mothers (%)</b>
Prolonged Absence of Parent	57.5
Bullied Often	26.1
Death of Parent/Sibling	24.4
Homelessness	22.5
Food Insecurity	18.0
Victim of Violent Crime	15.9



# Adversity Does Not End in Childhood

- The Adult Experiences Survey assesses adverse grownup experiences (AGEs), including:

## Spouse/Partner

- Physical abuse
- Emotional abuse
- Mental health problems
- AODA problems
- Incarceration/jail

## Other

- Forced sexual activity
- Crime victimization
- Homelessness
- Chronic poverty
- Discrimination





- Longitudinal study (2015-present) of risk and resilience
  - Over 1,400 families served by the FFHV program
  - Mothers complete surveys at multiple time points
  - Tracks child, parent, and family outcomes over time

# Adverse Grownup Experiences

<b>Spouse/Partner</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>%</b>
Physical abuse	45.1	Forced sexual activity	21.0
Emotional abuse	60.3	Crime victimization	31.9
Alcohol misuse/drug use	42.3	Homelessness	36.0
Mental health problem	33.5	Chronic poverty	23.4
Incarceration/jail	48.2	Discrimination	31.5

**1 or more AGEs = 85%; 2 or more AGEs = 70%**

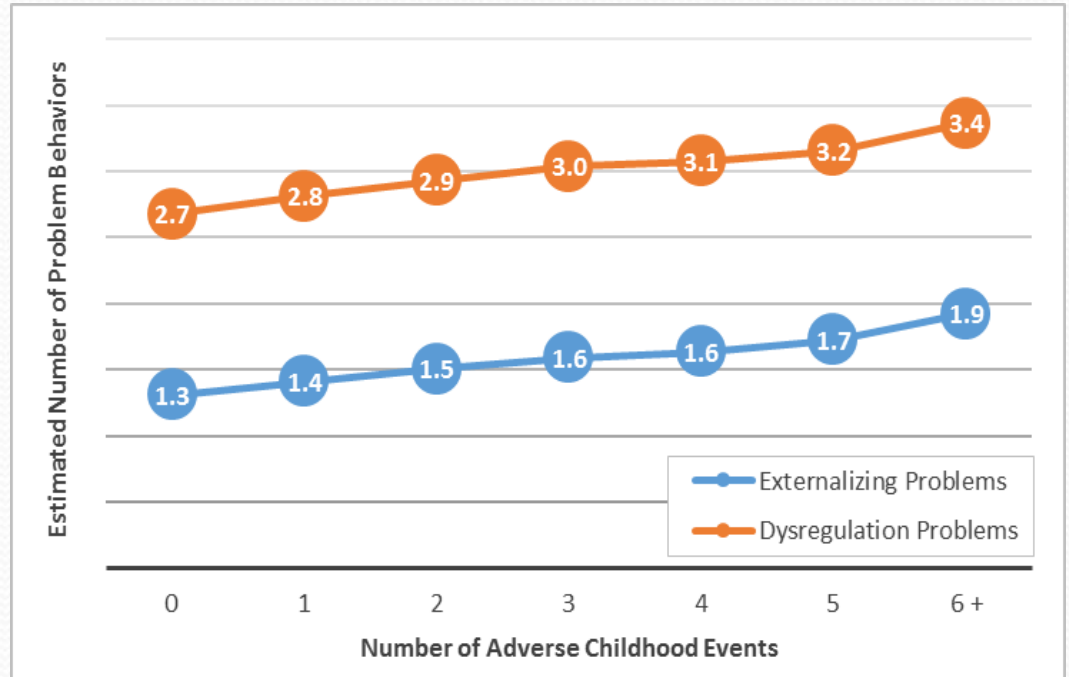
# Effects of Adversity on Mental Health

- ACEs → Poor Mental Health (depression, anxiety; PTSD)
- AGEs → Poor Mental Health
- ACEs → AGEs
- ACEs → AGEs → Poor Mental Health



# Intergenerational Effects

Mothers with higher ACE scores are more likely to have children with behavioral problems and emotion regulation problems



# What is Home Visiting?

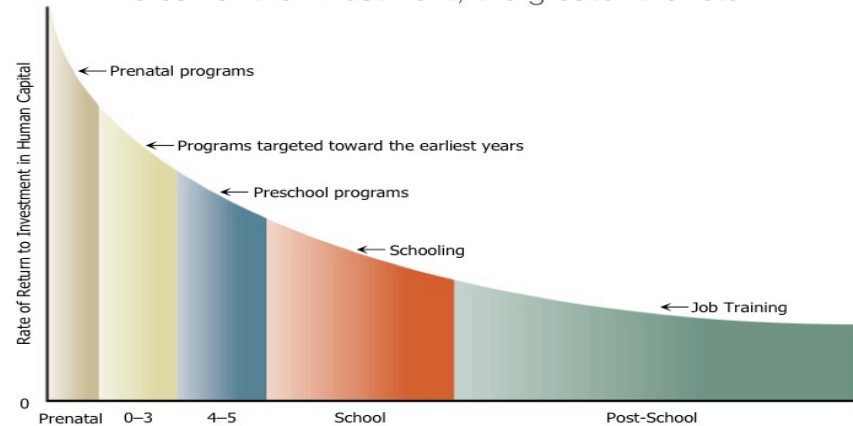
- Home visiting programs provide in-home services and support to pregnant women and new parents
  - “Two-generation” approach
  - Often delivered by health & human service providers
- Key outcomes
  - Maternal & child health
  - Child abuse & neglect prevention
  - Child development & school readiness

# Home Visiting is a Smart Investment

Home visiting programs and other early childhood interventions are effective & cost-effective

## EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IS A SMART INVESTMENT

The earlier the investment, the greater the return



Source: James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics



# Interrupting Intergenerational Trauma

- Home visiting has the potential to interrupt the intergenerational cycle of trauma
  - Parent/Caregiver = Intervention
  - Child = Prevention

# The Public Health Challenge

- Most home visiting programs provide long-term services
  - All models supported by the FFHV program are designed to serve families for multiple years
  - Difficult to scale up due to duration and cost

<b>FFHV PROGRAM, 2014-2016</b>	<b>2014</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>Total</b>
Families Newly Enrolled, Statewide	605	714	584	1903 <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Represents less than 1 out of 100 infants born in WI

# Family Connects: One Policy Solution

- Universal model → all families offered services during hospital visit
- Assessment conducted during initial home visit
- Services “triaged” → more visits and referrals according to family needs
- Promotes community resource alignment





# Family Connects: Evidence

- 80% of parents agreed to a home visit
- Improved home environment safety, child care quality, maternal mental health, and father involvement
- Reduced CPS reports and ER visits for infants
- Returned over \$3 for every \$1 invested

# Family Connects Racine County

- In 2017, Central Racine County Health Department (CRCHD) began to implement Family Connects with Ascension All Saints Hospital
  - Funding from United Way of Racine County & Racine County Human Services Department
- Able to serve up to 600 families per year with 3 nurses
- Delivered alongside its long-term home visiting program → families referred for further services as needed



# Trauma-Responsive Home Visiting

- CRCHD has integrated the Trauma Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (T-SBIRT) into Family Connects
  - 10-30 minutes to deliver
  - Prior research has shown that T-SBIRT is feasible to deliver in pediatric care and workforce development settings
  - Effective and efficient protocol for helping trauma victims access treatment and other services



# Takeaway Messages

1. Trauma is a major public health problem.
2. Home visiting is a two-generation strategy that has great potential to prevent trauma and mitigate its effects.
3. Targeted, long-term home visiting programs can't do it alone.
4. Family Connects is a short-term, universal home visiting model that is proven to be effective and cost-effective.
5. Wisconsin could develop a trauma-responsive home visiting system by combining brief, universal services with targeted, long-term services.