

CREATING A MORE TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT PROCESS

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Utah 2016 CIP Summit
August 25, 2016, Provo, UT

DEFINING TRAUMA AND UNDERSTANDING ITS EFFECTS

What is trauma?

- Experiencing/witnessing serious injury
- Facing imminent threats
- Violation of personal integrity
 - No control
 - Feelings of horror, terror, helplessness
- On going toxic stress = traumatic stress

WHAT DOES TRAUMA LOOK LIKE

Trauma overwhelms ones ability to cope.



WHAT DOES TRAUMA LOOK LIKE?



Trauma Leads to a robust Fight or Flight Response

THE EFFECTS OF TRAUMA (CHILDHOOD ADVERSITY)

- Adverse Childhood Experiences study (ACE)
 - www.acestudy.org
 - 10 ?'s

Abuse

Physical

Sexual

Emotional

Neglect

Physical

Emotional

Household Dysfunction

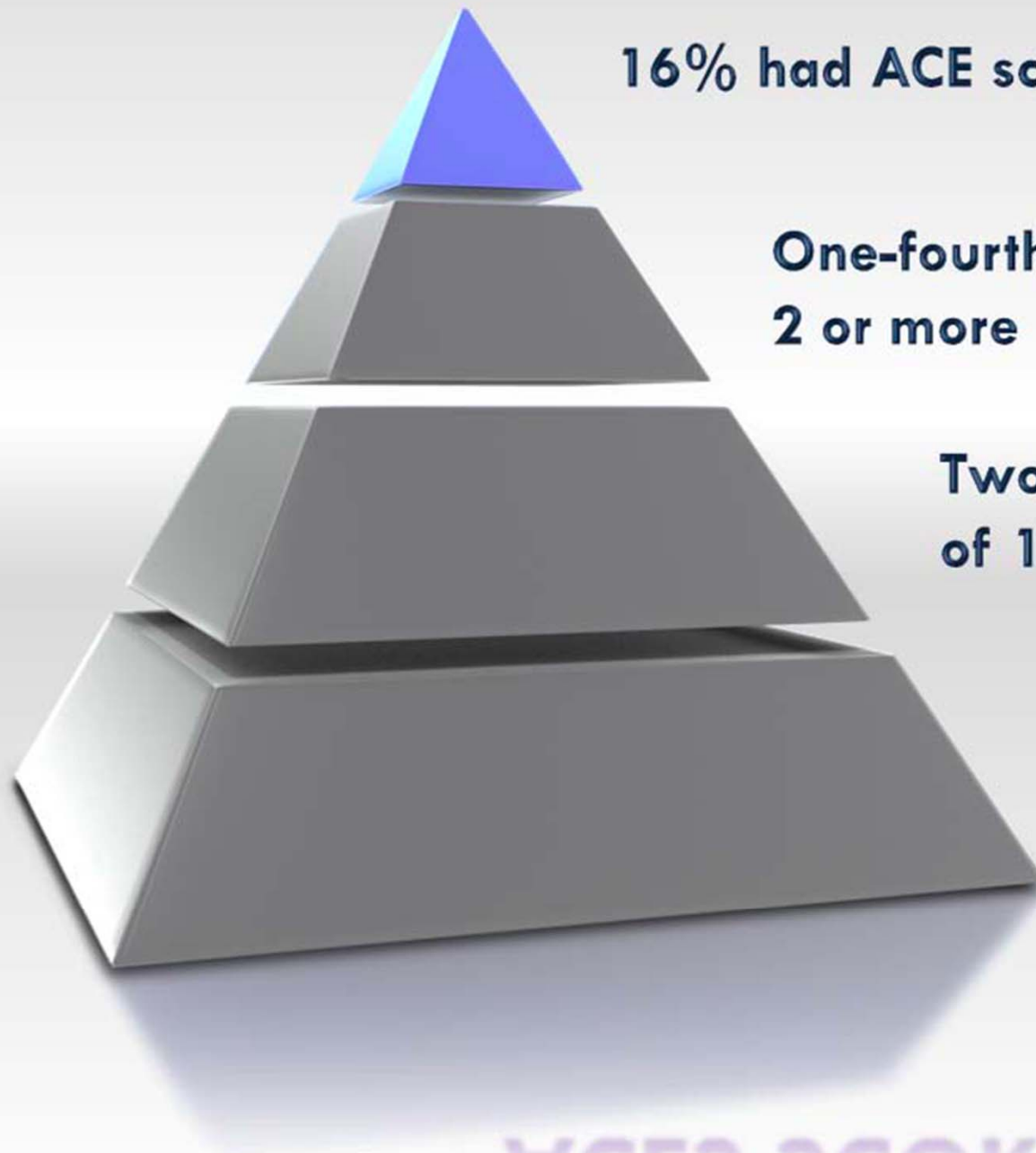
Domestic violence

Mental illness

Incarceration

Substance abuse

Divorce



16% had ACE score of 4 or more

One-fourth had ACE score of 2 or more

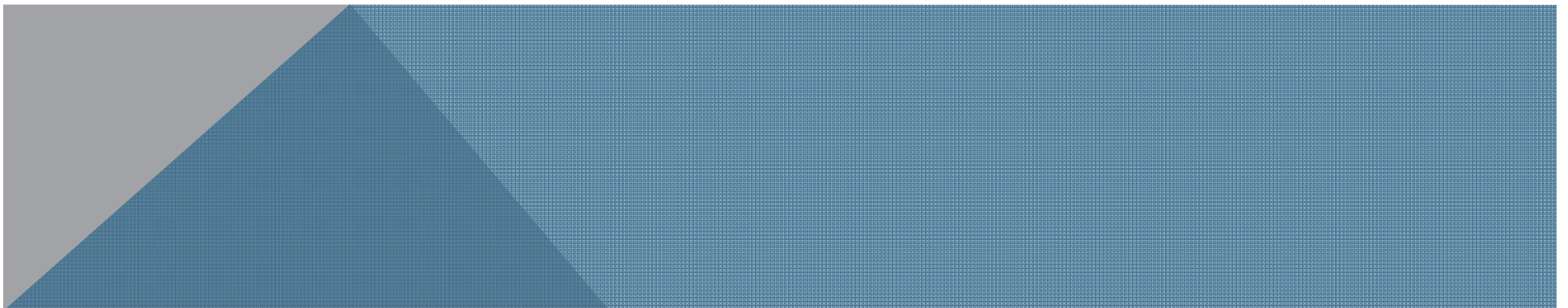
Two-thirds had ACE score of 1 or more

One third had 0 ACE score

WCE2 SCORE

ACES 4+

- Twice as likely to smoke
- Seven times more likely to be alcoholics
- Six times more likely to have had sex before the age of 15
- Twice as likely to have been diagnosed with cancer
- Ten times more likely to have injected street drugs
- **Twelve** times as likely to have attempted suicide



	Infants	Preschool Age	School Age	Adolescents
Behavioral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fussy • Decreased responsiveness • Trouble sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Behavior problems • Irritability • Trouble sleeping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aggression • Conduct problems • Disobedience • Regressive behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dating violence • Delinquency • Truancy • Running away
Social		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stranger anxiety • Trouble interacting with peers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fewer peer relations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early sexual activity • Increased risk for teen pregnancy
Emotional/ Psychology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attachment needs not met 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear/anxiety, worry • PTSD • Feeling unsafe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fear, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem • PTSD • Limited emotional response 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance abuse • Depression • Suicidal ideation • PTSD • Rage, shame
Cognitive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inability to understand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-blame 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distracted, inattentive • Academic problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short attention span • Defensive

What conditions are needed
to **promote healing** for
children and families?

CORE CONDITIONS OF HEALING

Safety



CORE CONDITIONS OF HEALING

Agency (Self-Determination) (Choice)



CORE CONDITIONS OF HEALING

Connectedness



What can you do to promote
conditions of healing in your
court?

CREATING A TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT SYSTEM

NCJFCJ preliminarily defines “trauma-responsive” court/system to mean a system in which environments, practices, policies, and persons limit unnecessary stress and promote healing in those who have been trauma-exposed, to include court consumers *and* court professionals.

EXAMINING TRAUMA IN THE COURTHOUSE

- Examination of environment, practice, policy and persons from “A to Z” through a lens of safety, agency, and connectedness.
- Look for:
 - Trauma triggers
 - General stress
 - Navigability
 - Interaction of stakeholders with each other and parties
 - Ability to apply trauma training in a meaningful way

WHAT WE ARE SEEING IN THE COURTS

- Burnout and turnover
- No inoculation training (secondary traumatic stress)
- Environmental stressors
- Difficult to navigate
- Challenges in applying knowledge about trauma

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT: PERSONS

- Create a shared definition of trauma
- Prioritize secondary traumatic stress
- Solicit opinions of community members
- Promote diversity in court professionals

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT: ENVIRONMENT

- Promote SAFETY
- Create an environment conducive to limiting arousal
- Low stress process

SAFETY

Victims need a place to sit where they will feel safe from their perpetrators



SAFETY

People need to feel safe coming into the court, within the courtrooms, and in waiting areas



PROCESS NOT STRESSFUL -NAVIGABILITY

The court is easy to navigate.



PROCESS NOT STRESSFUL

Clients have somewhere to meet with their attorney separate from general waiting area.

Consumers do not have to wait for long periods of time for their hearings



ENVIRONMENT – LIMITING AROUSAL

- Environment should be comfortable
- Aesthetic
- Appropriate lighting and temperature
- Minimize Noise
 - Bailiffs calling out names of parties in the waiting area
 - Loud speakers
 - Overcrowded waiting areas

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT: POLICY

- Implement a policy that eliminates presumptive shackling for juveniles appearing in court.

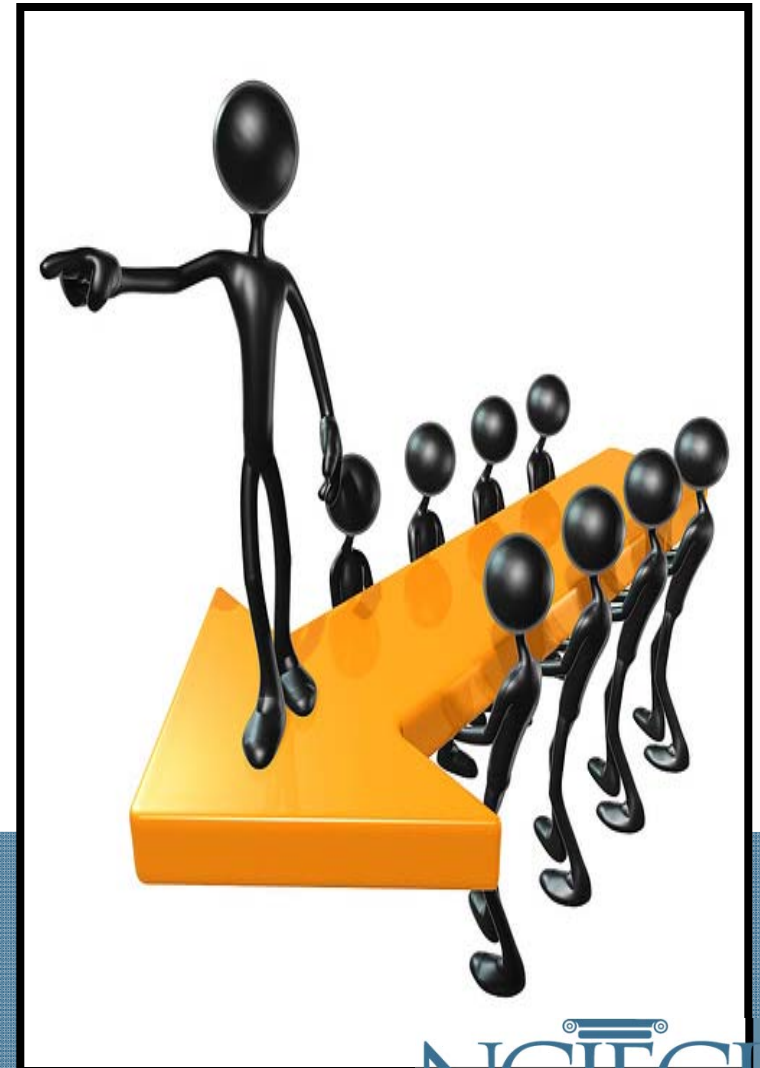


RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURT: PRACTICE

- Trauma screening
- Engage youth in the court process (encourage attendance)
- Engage parents in the court process
- Promote healing environment through positive interactions with the court
- Promote position pro-social connections for youth and families.

TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE COURTS: ADDITIONAL IDEAS

- Judicial leadership and collaboration
- Ask questions (e.g., why do we do X, Y, Z?)
- Ensure staff are trained and on the same page
- Implement universal precautions
- Practice and model self care
- Engage persons of character





ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

National Child Traumatic Stress Network

www.nctsn.org

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges

www.ncjfcj.org

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

www.acestudy.org

Contact Information for Questions/ Follow-Up
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