



Windsor-Essex County Health Unit Board of Health

RECOMMENDATION/RESOLUTION REPORT – Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Local Policy Advancement

2025-11-20

ISSUE

Early adversities or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES) are stressful or traumatic events occurring before the age of 18 that can trigger extreme or prolonged stress response, potentially leading to serious health issues later in life. These experiences may include physical, sexual, or emotional abuse; physical and emotional neglect; and household dysfunction such as parental separation, exposure to domestic violence, or substance use issues.

Locally, rising indications of youth mental health challenges, family stress, and community violence point to ongoing exposure to adversity among children and youth in Windsor and Essex County (WEC). Despite the well documented health and social costs of ACEs, prevention and trauma informed response are not yet fully integrated across community systems such as education, housing, health care and social services.

The issue is compounded by other broader systematic and individual traumas, including colonialism, racism, housing instability, children from low-income households, newcomers, and Indigenous communities. These individuals face a greater likelihood of exposure to ACEs with few accessible protective supports. Without coordinated, upstream policy action, ACEs will continue to drive intergenerational cycles of trauma, health inequity and system strain.

Preventing ACEs is increasingly recognized as an upstream public health strategy to reduce substance use, prevent chronic diseases and mental health issues, improve overall health, and address health inequities faced by families. A trauma-informed care approach is a foundational strategy in addressing ACEs. A trauma-informed approach acknowledges the widespread nature of trauma especially among children, youth and families and its effects on health. It involves adapting organizational policies and to foster resilience, prevent re-traumatization and promote safe, supportive environments for both clients and staff.

BACKGROUND

In May 2025, [the WECHU presented a board information report](#) outlining the significance of ACEs in our region. The presentation focused on what ACEs are, their health implications, populations most at risk, protective factors and key WECHU activities planned for 2025 which included:

- **Staff Capacity Building** – The WECHU has developed e-learning training modules on ACEs and trauma-informed care for all staff. Completion of this training will be mandatory throughout the organization and integrated into staff orientation, and annual refresher courses. In addition, the WECHU will share the e-learning modules with other community organizations and health care providers, encouraging the adoption of training within their own organization to build capacity and understanding of ACEs with their employees.
- **Policy Development/Implementation** – A corporate policy has been developed to guide implementation and integration of trauma-informed principles into daily WECHU operations. This policy ensures consistent application of training across WECHU programs and services. The WECHU will share this policy with other

community partners and health care providers to encourage adoption of similar policies to develop consistent, community wide application of ACEs and trauma informed care principles with clients.

- **Community Collaboration** – As a key priority, the WECHU is working with key community organizations to establish a working committee to address ACEs and trauma from a regional perspective. An initial meeting was held in June 2025 with interest from several local groups to work and collaborate on future initiatives focused on ACEs and trauma informed care.
- **Regional Communication Strategy**- The WECHU is developing communication messages about ACES including tips for parents and families to create positive experiences, and targeted messaging for priority populations introducing the concept of positive and adverse childhood experiences (PACES). Rollout of messaging is planned for early December 2025.

PROPOSED MOTION

WHEREAS Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are linked to a range of negative health and social outcomes across the lifespan, including chronic disease, mental illness, substance use disorders, and premature mortality; and

WHEREAS Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) contribute to significant health inequities that disproportionately affect children and families facing poverty, racism, housing/food instability, and other systemic barriers; and

WHEREAS national data indicates that 61.6% of the population has experienced at least one Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) in their lifetime and locally 19.3% of respondents had experienced at least one childhood maltreatment incident in Windsor-Essex County (Dawdy et. al., 2025)

WHEREAS the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health can endorse comprehensive policy recommendations that will help to address various health sectors in the region by focusing on the prevention and mitigation of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma; and

WHEREAS public health has a legislative mandate to promote health equity, prevent illness, and address the social determinants of health through multi-sectoral collaboration and policy advocacy.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health supports engaging local community partners to co-develop strategies that reduce exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma and strengthen protective factors across the region by encouraging adoption of WECHU's training resources and policy within partner organizations;

AND FURTHER THAT the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health will support local collaboration with health care providers through the sharing of resources, research/data, best practices and recommends health care providers adopt WECHU's training resources and policies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and trauma informed principles within their own professional development and practices;

AND FURTHER THAT the Windsor-Essex County Board of Health calls on municipal, provincial, and federal partners to implement policies and funding that prevent ACEs by addressing poverty, housing insecurity, food access, and family supports;

AND FURTHER THAT, that the Windsor-Essex County Health Unit calls on the provincial government to ensure sustained provincial investment (i.e., funding, training and enhancement of programs and services focused on ACEs) in upstream initiatives that support at risk children, youth and families and help prevent or mitigate adverse childhood experiences, trauma and associated health issues and behaviours.

Key References:

Center for Health Care Strategies (2018). Brief: Laying the Groundwork for Trauma-Informed Care. Retrieved from https://www.chcs.org/media/Laying-the-Groundwork-for-TIC_012418.pdf

Dawdy, J., Dunford, K. and Magalhaes Boateng, K. (2025). Ontario Early Adversity and Resilience Framework. Public Health Ontario Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience Community of Practice

Madigan, S., (2023). Adverse childhood experiences: a meta-analysis of prevalence and moderators among half a million adults in 206 studies. *World Psychiatry* 2023; 22:463–471