

# Child Safety: A Proactive Response

Presented by:

Doug Cherry, BA

Forensic Interviewer/Awareness Advocate

Tawana Williams, MS, LAC

Therapist/Awareness Advocate



*Percy & Donna Malone*  
**CHILD SAFETY CENTER**

Resources and documentation for this training can  
be found at: [www.pdmcsc.org/trainingmaterials](http://www.pdmcsc.org/trainingmaterials)





## Conversation:

Why do you work with kids?





**Purpose:**

Awareness and  
Application



# Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Study

- A study to research the correlation between childhood trauma and adult health outcomes.
- Childhood traumas included: Abuse, Neglect, and Household Dysfunction
- Adult health outcomes included: Mental Health, Physical Health, and Behavioral Health
- The ACEs Study found direct and dramatic correlations between the levels of childhood trauma and the levels of negative adult health outcomes.





# What's an ACE Score?



# ACEs Study – Findings on Childhood Trauma

2/3 of people have 1+ ACEs

1/4 of people have 3+ ACEs

- **Childhood Abuse**

- Physical Abuse – 28%
- Sexual Abuse – 21%
- Emotional Abuse – 11%

- **Childhood Neglect**

- Emotional Neglect – 15%
- Physical Neglect – 10%

- **Childhood Household Dysfunction**

- Substance Abuse – 27%
- Parental separation/divorce – 23%
- Mental illness – 19%
- Intimate partner violence – 13%
- Incarcerated family member – 6%



# ACEs Study – Adult Health Outcome Trends

Higher ACEs Scores = Greater Likelihood of Negative Adult Health Outcomes

- **Mental Health**

- Increased levels of depression, anxiety, suicide, and PTSD

- **Physical Health**

- Increased levels of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, obesity, strokes, sexually transmitted infections, and early death

- **Behavioral Health**

- Increased levels of addiction, alcohol abuse, drug abuse, smoking, unsafe sex, sexual partners, and unwanted pregnancies
- Decreased levels of educational, occupational, and financial advancement





# ACEs Are Not Destiny!

Developing **Resilience** in a child can overcome many of the negative health outcomes associated with ACEs.







# Resilience Trumps ACEs

What are some ways you can increase the resilience of the children you serve?



# Resilience Trumps ACEs

What are some ways you can increase the resilience of the children you serve?

- Showing empathy
- Creating a sense of belonging
- Giving hope
- Developing trust
- Empowering choices
- Encouraging teamwork
- Developing social connections
- Showing appreciation
- Developing self-esteem
- Allowing failure
- Allowing success
- Modeling appropriate behaviors
- **Attachment to a safe, healthy, consistent and caring adult**



# ACEs Conversation

- How do you see ACEs affecting the **children** and **families** in your **community**, and in your **organization**?
- How does a **knowledge** of ACEs and Resilience **inform** or **change** your understanding of **service** in your organization?



Q&A:

# Adverse Childhood Experiences and Resilience



**Next Topic:**  
Child Abuse & Neglect

# Child Abuse and Neglect Defined

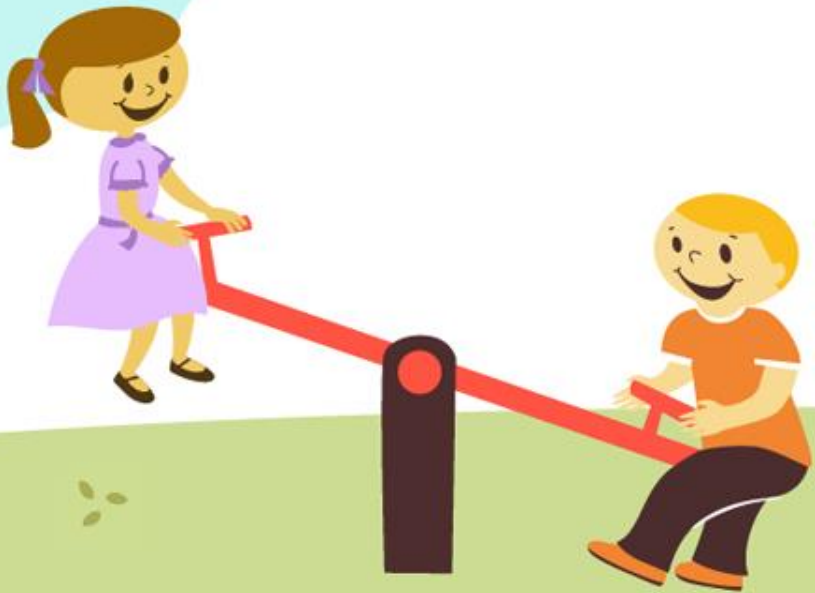
- “Child maltreatment is the abuse and/or neglect that occurs to children under 18 years of age. It includes all types of physical and/or emotional maltreatment, sexual abuse, neglect, negligence, and commercial or other exploitation, which results in actual or potential harm to the child’s health, survival, development, or dignity in the context of a relationship of responsibility, trust or power.” – World Health Organization





# True or False?

7.15% of children have experienced some form of child abuse or neglect within the last year.

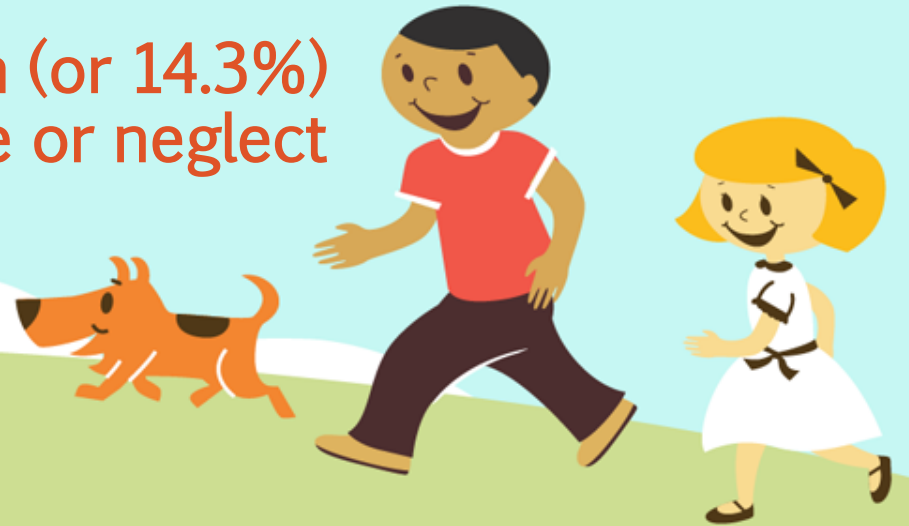


# False

~~7.15% of children have experienced some form of child abuse or neglect within the last year.~~

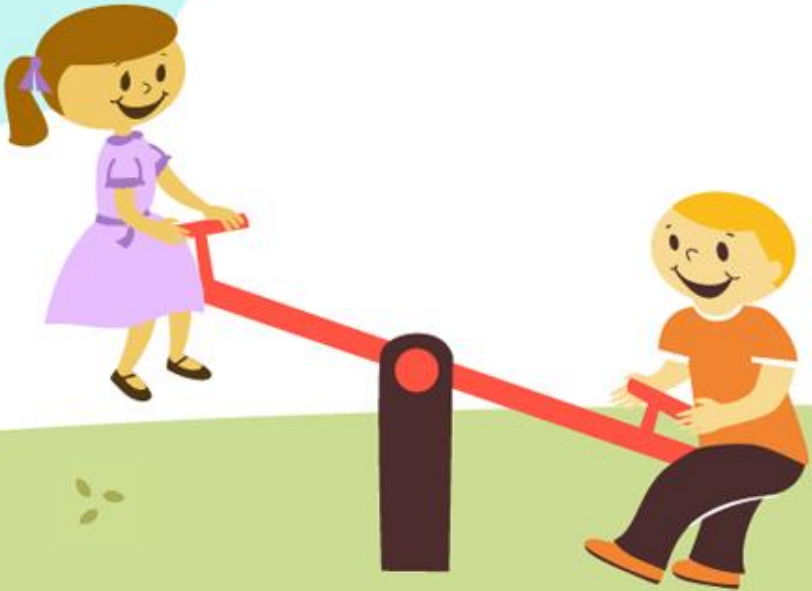
## In Fact:

According to the CDC, about 1 in 7 children (or 14.3%) have experienced some form of child abuse or neglect within the last year.



# True or False?

25% of girls are sexually abused before the age of 18.



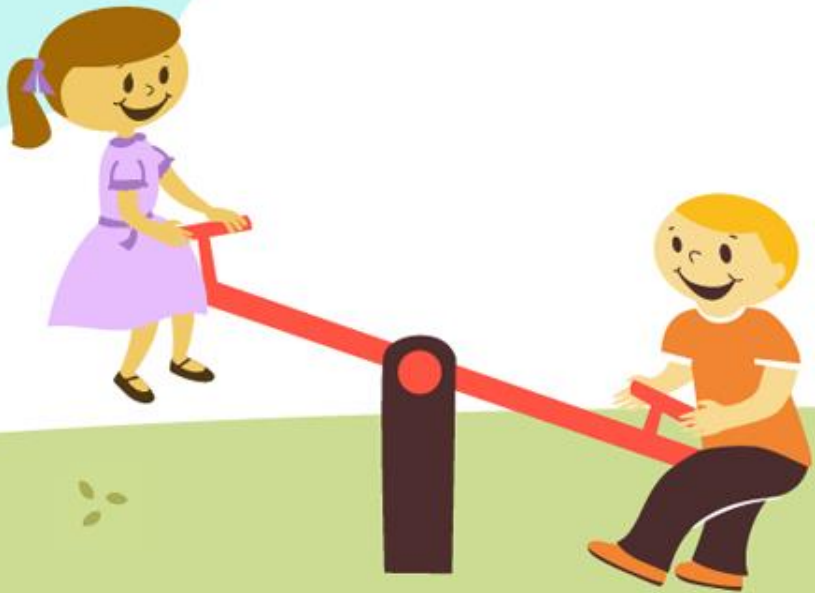
# True

According to the CDC, approximately 1 in 4 girls (25%) will experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18.



# True or False?

7.7% of boys are sexually abused before the age of 18.



# True

According to the CDC, approximately 1 in 13 boys (7.7%) will experience some form of sexual abuse before the age of 18.





# Prevalence of Child Abuse and Neglect

## (part 1)

- Approximately **1 in 7** (or **10.4 million**) children experienced child abuse or neglect in the last year. This number is an estimate of all occurrences, reported and unreported.<sup>1</sup>
- Nearly **700,000** children are “**substantiated**” as abused or neglected in the U.S. each year. This number represents only investigated and substantiated unique incidents and does not include unreported and unsubstantiated cases of maltreatment.<sup>2</sup>
- **5 children die** every day from maltreatment in the U.S. (1,840 in 2019).<sup>3</sup>
- Rates of abuse and neglect are 5 times higher for children living in **poverty**.<sup>1</sup>
  - Sources: <sup>1</sup>cdc.gov, <sup>2</sup>nationalchildrensalliance.org, <sup>3</sup>nationalchildabusecoalition.org



# Prevalence of Child Abuse & Neglect (part 2)

- The most common forms of substantiated child maltreatment<sup>1</sup>:
  - Neglect 75%,
  - Physical Abuse 18%
  - Sexual Abuse 9%
  - Psychological maltreatment 6%
- Research estimates that **1 in 4 girls**, and **1 in 13 boys** will be sexually abused before they turn 18 years old.<sup>2</sup>
- 91% of sexual abuse offenders are **known to the victim**.<sup>2</sup>
  - Sources: <sup>1</sup>childwelfare.gov, <sup>2</sup>cdc.gov



# Signs of Neglect

## Physical

- Deficient growth rate
- Underweight
- Poor hygiene
- Weather inappropriate clothing
- Wearing of the same clothing for multiple days in a row
- Lack of supplies/resources
- Lack of medical care

## Behavioral

- Often hungry
- Takes food or money without permission
- Hiding food
- Arrives early and leaves late
- Poor record of school attendance
- Often tired or listless



# Signs of Physical Abuse

## Physical

- Unexplained injuries, such as bruises, fractures, burns, or bites
- Injuries that don't match a given explanation
- Injuries in unusual places or in unusual patterns
- Bruising or injury in various stages of healing

## Behavioral

- Fear of certain people or places
- Avoids any kind of touch or physical contact
- Seem to often be on “high alert”
- Wears clothing the does not match the weather to cover injuries
- Withdrawal from friends and activities



# Signs of Sexual Abuse

## Physical

- Bruising, bleeding, or discharge from or around the genitals
- Pain or itching around the genitals which may cause difficulty in walking, sitting, or urination
- Pregnancy or Sexually Transmitted Infection
- **Most sexual abuse victims do not exhibit physical signs of abuse**

## Behavioral

- Sexual behavior/knowledge that's inappropriate for the child's age
- Inappropriate sexual contact with other children
- Avoidance of a certain person
- Exhibits self harm behaviors
- Socially withdrawn
- Running away from home



# Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

- Before making a report you should gather enough information to **identify and locate the child and/or the child's family**. Gather the alleged victim's name, age (or approximate age), address (or school attended), and phone number (optional). If possible, gather basic information about the alleged offender. However, do not insert yourself into the situation or do something to foil an investigation.
- Your report will **remain confidential**, and you will only be contact if an investigator needs additional information.
- Remember, **you do not need proof** of abuse or neglect, only **suspicion**.
- **To report child abuse or neglect, call 844-SAVE-A-CHILD (844-728-3224)**





Q&A:

# Child Abuse and Neglect: Types, Prevalence, Signs, and Reporting



Next Up:  
Stretch Break

# Stretch Break

A person is standing on a light-colored yoga mat in a bright, sunlit room. The person is wearing grey leggings and is barefoot. Their hands are positioned on the mat, palms facing down, and their feet are also on the mat. The background is a large window with a view of greenery outside, creating a soft, natural light. The overall scene is calm and focused on physical well-being.

Next Topic:  
Managing Disclosure

# Managing Disclosure: The Dynamics of Disclosure

- A victim's disclosure of abuse or neglect may be a **progressive process** more than a single event.
- Victims of child abuse or neglect can often **feel helpless, isolated, and shamed**.
- Disclosure can be very difficult for a child victim. **A trustworthy adult, a safe context, and the hope of protective actions** can help a victim in disclosure.
- Approximately **50% of children will initially deny allegations**, even with supporting evidence.
- **Stages of disclosure** may include 1) Denial, 2) Tentative Disclosure, 3) Active Disclosure, 4) Retraction, and 5) Reaffirmation.



# Managing Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- The **FIRST Response** was developed to help individuals who may receive a disclosure of child abuse or neglect from an alleged victim.
- An initial disclosure may be the only disclosure, or the most definitive disclosure. Therefore, it's helpful to know how to appropriately respond.
- It is critical to respond in a way that **does not retraumatize** the child or **interfere** with an investigation of child maltreatment.
- It is necessary to **consider ahead of time how you will respond** to a child's disclosure of abuse or neglect.



# Managing Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- **F**ind a Safe Location
- **I**dentify your Concerns
- **R**apport with the Child
- **S**eek Details
- **T**ell the Hotline



# How to Manage a Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- **F**ind a Safe Location

- Identify your Concerns

- Rapport with the Child

- Seek Details

- Tell the Hotline

- Choose a **location** where the child is **safe** and feels **free to share**.
- Choose an **appropriate time**, not when the child is engaged in an activity.
- Connect **one-on-one** with the child, yet **not in isolation**.
- Be **discreet** in how you invite the child into the conversation.



# How to Manage a Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- Find a Safe Location
  - **I**dentify your Concerns
  - Rapport with the Child
  - Seek Details
  - Tell the Hotline
- Express your **care** for the child.
  - Share your specific **concerns**.
  - Ask **open-ended** questions.
  - Listen carefully and ask **relevant** follow up questions.
  - Never make **assumptions, suggestions, allegations, or denials**.



# How to Manage a Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- Find a Safe Location
  - Identify your Concerns
  - **R**apport with the Child
  - Seek Details
  - Tell the Hotline
- Be mindful of your **body language**.
  - Get on the **child's level** to speak and listen eye-to-eye.
  - Use an appropriate **tone of voice**.
  - Consider your **phrasing and language**.
  - Foster **trust** and **understanding**.
  - Do not **overreact** or **underreact**.





# How to Manage a Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- Find a Safe Location
  - Identify your Concerns
  - Rapport with the Child
  - **Seek Details**
  - Tell the Hotline
- Listen carefully.
  - Avoid leading questions.
  - Say: “Tell me more about that?” when clarity is needed.
  - Listen for the “Who”, “What”, “When”, “Where”.
  - Do **not** try to conduct an investigation.
  - Do **not** attempt to contact the alleged offender.



# How to Manage a Disclosure: The FIRST Response

- **F**ind a Safe Location
  - **I**dentify your Concerns
  - **R**apport with the Child
  - **S**eek Details
  - **T**ell the Hotline
- **Thank** the child for sharing.
  - Organize **information** for reporting.
  - **Document** the actual wording of the child.
  - Provide a **way to locate** the child and the child's family.
  - Do not share this information with others.
  - **Make the call!**
  - **1-844-SAVE-A-CHILD**  
(1-844-728-3224)



Q&A:

# Managing Disclosure and The FIRST Response

Next Topic:  
Child Sex Trafficking



# Human Trafficking Defined

- Four Types of Human Trafficking
  - **Child Sex Trafficking** (our focal point in this training)
  - Adult Sex Trafficking
  - Child Labor Trafficking
  - Adult Labor Trafficking
- **Sex trafficking** is the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, obtaining, patronizing, or soliciting of a person for the purposes of a **commercial sex act**, in which the commercial sex act is induced by **force**, **fraud**, or **coercion**, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age (22 USC § 7102).



# Forms of Child Sex Trafficking

- **Familial** – When a child is trafficked by a family member, or someone perceived as like a family member, or close friend of the family member. Child victims of familial trafficking are less likely to be reported as missing and typical red flag indicators may not be present.
- **Crime Group Controlled** – Organized crime, mafias, and gangs work to systematically structure and profit from child sex trafficking.
- **Pimp-Controlled** – A single trafficker exploiting one or more victims. The pimp often assumes the role of boyfriend or lover to build loyalty and control.
- **Buyer-Perpetrated** – An individual who initiates paying a minor for sex.



# Other Facts about Child Sex Trafficking

- UNICEF estimates there are over **100,000** victims of CST in the United States.
- **Age 12-13** is the average age of entry into child sex trafficking.
- 84% of child sex trafficking victims are **female**.
- The top five **risk factors** associated with CST victims are:
  - substance abuse
  - runaway/homeless youth
  - unstable housing
  - mental health challenges
  - recent migration/relocation.





# Signs of Child Sex Trafficking

## Physical

- Signs of **abuse** or neglect
- Unexplained access to **cash/credit**
- Association with an overly **controlling adult**
- Multiple phones or phone numbers
- Increase in **material goods** inconsistent with the child's socioeconomic status
- **Drug use** and access to “party drugs”

## Behavioral

- **Avoids answering** questions or lets others speak for them
- Appears frightened, resistant, or belligerent to **law enforcement**
- **Lies** about their **age** and **identity**
- **Stops engaging** in usual activities
- Significant **changes in behaviors**
- **Unexplained absences** from school
- **Chronically runs away** from home





# Reporting Child Sex Trafficking

- Human Trafficking Hotline 888-373-7888
- Human Trafficking Textline 233733
- Chat line at [www.humantraffickinghotline.org](http://www.humantraffickinghotline.org)



# Q&A: Child Sex Trafficking

**Next Topic:**  
Online Safety



BE CAREFUL WHAT YOU  
SHARE ONLINE



You're mine now.



# Online Safety

- **Online Predators** – These may be **pedophiles, traffickers, or sextortionists** who utilize the **internet and social media apps** to target and groom children. They often pose as someone they are not and work to develop trust, leverage compliance, or meet the child in person.
- **Pornography** – 84%-93% of teen boys have viewed pornography. 57%-60% of teen girls have viewed pornography. Two of the top 10 most visited websites in the U.S. are porn sites. The average age of first exposure to porn is 11. Porn is **highly addictive** and can significantly **affect brain development and mental health**.



# Online Safety

- **Sexting (images/text)** – Approximately **20% of teens** are sending or receiving nude or revealing photos or sexually explicit texts through cell phones and social media apps. It is important that we emphasize to teens that anything sent electronically or shared on the internet becomes **public and permanent**.
- **Cyberbullying** – This is bullying via the internet or cellphone and can include sending harassing messages, posting private pictures, and posting false information. 1 in 4 children/teens will experience bullying. **1 in 5 children/teens will experience cyberbullying**.
- **Gaming/Social Media** – 97% of teens play computer, online, portable or console games. 95% are on YouTube, 67% are on TikTok, 62% are on Instagram, 59% are on Snapchat, and 32% are on Facebook. These are often the platforms that online predators frequent to engage children.



# Reporting Internet Crimes Against Children

- Cyber Tipline: 800-843-5678
- Online at [www.cybertipline.org](http://www.cybertipline.org)



# Q&A: Online Safety

**Next Topic:**

Safe Adults & Safe Organizations



# Safe Adults – Be In The Know

- Become ever more aware of **child safety issues**.
- Learn about emerging **social and cultural dynamics**.
- Understand **child development**.
- Research the latest on **cognitive science** and **neuroscience**.





# Safe Adults – Be Approachable

- Express **care** and **compassion**
- Exercise **patience**, **encouragement**, and **authenticity**
- **Listen** carefully and exhibit **respect**
- Know the child's **story** and **life** circumstances
- **Invest** into the life of a child to make a difference



# Safe Organizations

- Utilize **Background Checks** to screen for criminal convictions.
- Utilize **Child Maltreatment Checks** to screen for “Substantiated” child maltreatment allegations.
- Practice “**Two-Deep Leadership**”. There should never be less than two adults serving at anytime and in any context. Isolated one-on-one adult to child situations should always be prohibited.
- **Photographs** of children in care should not be used, posted, or displayed without parental authorized via written release documentation.
- Adults should always practice **limited** and **appropriate physical touch**.
- Teach **child safety rules** and encourage children to identify “**Safe Adults**”.



# Contact Information

- **Doug Cherry** - Forensic Interviewer/Awareness Advocate
  - [doug.cherry@pdmcsc.org](mailto:doug.cherry@pdmcsc.org)
- **Tawana Williams** - Therapist/Awareness Advocate
  - [tawana.williams@pdmcsc.org](mailto:tawana.williams@pdmcsc.org)
- **Percy & Donna Malone Child Safety Center**
  - [www.pdmcsc.org](http://www.pdmcsc.org)
  - 870-403-6879



*Percy & Donna Malone*  
**CHILD SAFETY CENTER**

Resources and documentation for this training can be found at: [www.pdmcsc.org/trainingmaterials](http://www.pdmcsc.org/trainingmaterials)

