

# **Review of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) Survey of Jefferson County Community Corrections Clients**



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Jefferson County Community Corrections routinely offers to new clients the ten question Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) survey developed by Dr. Robert Anda and Dr. Vincent Felitti. The survey asks whether a person has ever experienced the following before their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

1. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you? or Act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
2. Did a parent or other adult in the household often or very often... Push, grab, slap, or throw something at you? or Ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
3. Did an adult or person at least 5 years older than you ever... Touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way? or Attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal intercourse with you?
4. Did you often or very often feel that ... No one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special? or Your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
5. Did you often or very often feel that ... You didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you? or Your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
6. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
7. Was your mother or stepmother:  
Often or very often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her? or Sometimes, often, or very often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard? or Ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
8. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
9. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill, or did a household member attempt suicide?
10. Did a household member go to prison?

As part of its intake process, the Jefferson County Community Corrections has asked clients to complete the ACEs survey. During the time period of March 2022 to October 2022, 114 surveys were completed. While no demographic information was collected, the surveys included the client's name. That information was taken to determine Female, Male, and Unknown if the gender could not be determined by the name. There were 51 females, 60 males, and 3 unknowns in this study.

The data compiled by the Community Corrections clients was compared to the Jefferson County Community survey that was taken in the fall of 2021 by Resilient Jefferson County. As part of this survey, the research team from Indiana University Southeast provided a statistically weighted sample that better represented the demographics of Jefferson County. More information regarding the Jefferson County survey can be found at <https://www.resilientjeffersoncounty.org/survey>. Table 1 shows the average ACE score of Community Corrections clients vs the score of Jefferson County residents. Persons in Community Corrections had a score that was 0.7 greater than the overall population. ACEs research indicates that as ACE scores increase, the greater likelihood for health and social issues. Table 2 illustrates some of the likelihoods.

**Table 1**  
**Average ACE Score**

<u>Community Corrections</u>	<u>Jefferson County</u>
3.1	2.4

The average ACE score for the women in the study was 3.14 and for the men, it was 2.92. For the three unknowns, the average score was 5.67.

So, what does the ACE score mean and why is it important. As shown in Table 2 shows, as one's ACE score increases, so does the likelihood of suffering from a physical or mental health issue.

**Table 2**

<b>Category</b>	<b>ACE SCORE OF 0</b>	<b>ACE SCORE OF 4</b>
Likelihood of becoming an alcoholic	2.50%	11%
Suffering from chronic depression	15% women	42% women
	10% men	30% men
Having a serious problem working	5%	15%
Having serious financial problems	10%	20%
Chance of heart disease	3.70%	5.60%
Having a stroke	2.60%	4.10%

Source: <https://stopabusecampaign.org/take-your-ace-test/what-does-your-ace-score-mean/>

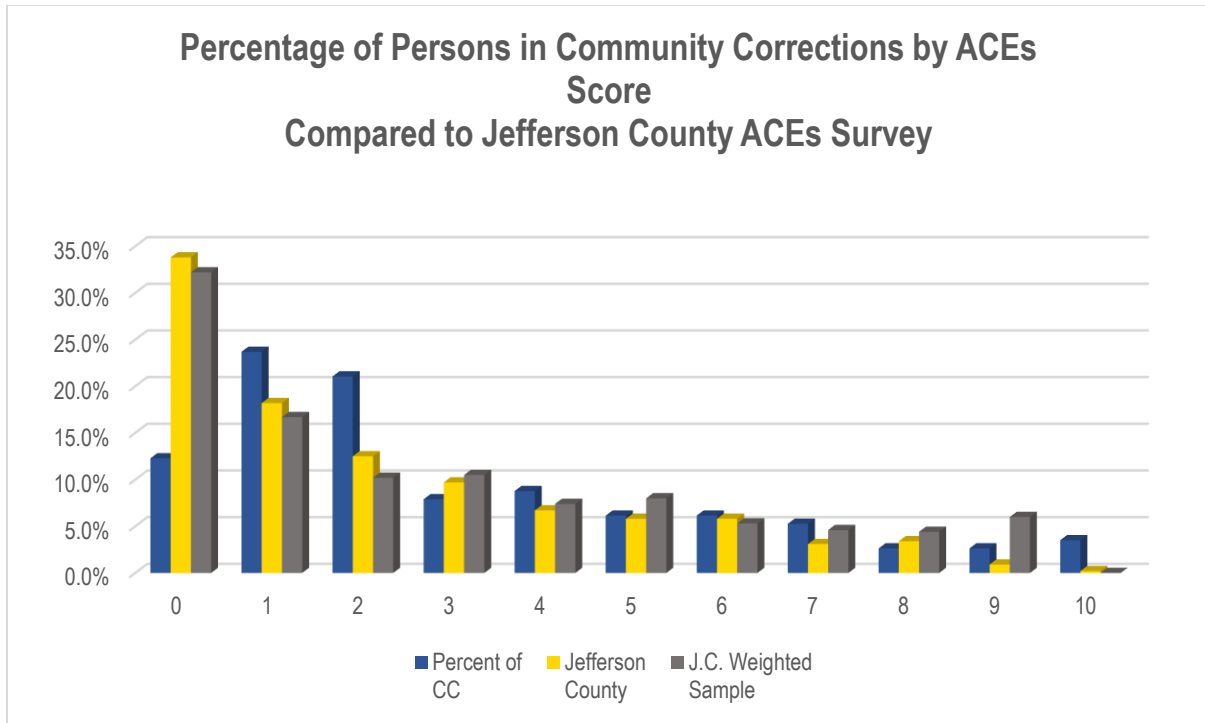
Table 3 is a breakdown and comparison of the number of ACEs between the Community Corrections respondents (CC) and the Jefferson County survey

**Table 3**

<b>ACE Score</b>	<b>Percent of CC</b>	<b>Jefferson County</b>	<b>J.C. Weighted Sample</b>
0	12.3%	33.8%	32.2%
1	23.7%	18.2%	16.7%
2	21.1%	12.5%	10.2%
3	7.9%	9.7%	10.5%
4	8.8%	6.7%	7.4%
5	6.1%	5.8%	8.0%
6	6.1%	5.8%	5.3%
7	5.3%	3.1%	4.6%
8	2.6%	3.4%	4.4%
9	2.6%	0.9%	0.6%
10	3.5%	0.2%	0.0%

This information is graphically represented in Chart 1

**Chart 1**



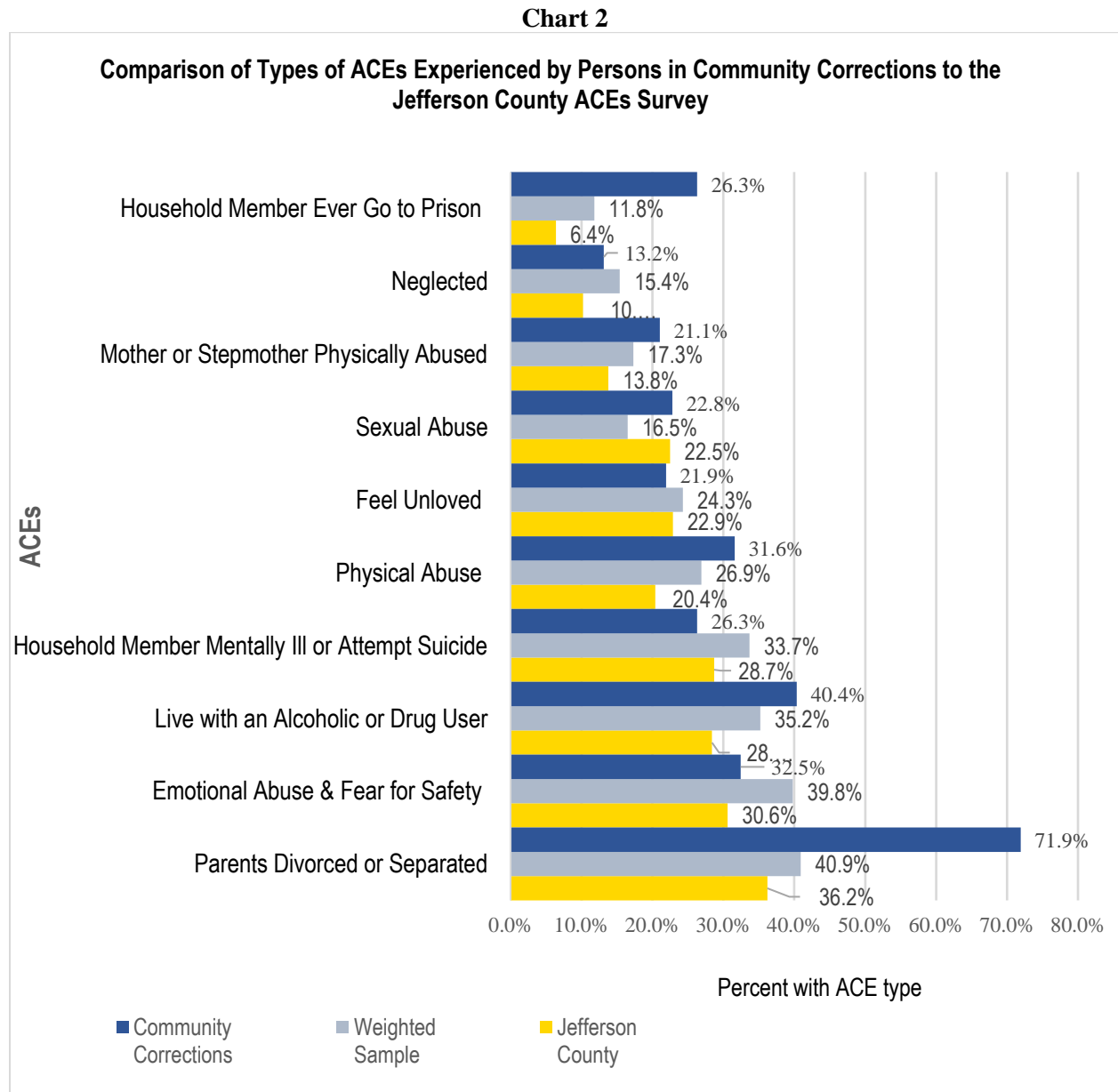
It is interesting to note that 35.1 percent of people in Community Corrections had four or more ACEs while only 25.9 percent of those persons who responded to the Jefferson County had four or more ACEs. For the weighted sample, the percentage was 30.3 percent.

Table 4 shows the percentage of respondents that reported each ACE type. .

**Table 4**

<u>ACEs</u>	<u>Jefferson County</u>	<u>Weighted Sample</u>	<u>Community Corrections</u>
Parents Divorced or Separated	36.2%	40.9%	71.9%
Emotional Abuse & Fear for Safety	30.6%	39.8%	32.5%
Live with an Alcoholic or Drug User	28.4%	35.2%	40.4%
Household Member Mentally Ill or Attempt Suicide	28.7%	33.7%	26.3%
Physical Abuse	20.4%	26.9%	31.6%
Feel Unloved	22.9%	24.3%	21.9%
Sexual Abuse	22.5%	16.5%	22.8%
Mother or Stepmother Physically Abused	13.8%	17.3%	21.1%
Neglected	10.2%	15.4%	13.2%
Household Member Ever Go to Prison	6.4%	11.8%	26.3%

The above information is shown in the Chart 2



A surprising finding from this study is the much higher percentage of people in Community Corrections who came from families where the parents were divorced or separated. Another question that seems to have a greater difference is if a household member went to prison. These data suggest that working with professional researchers in this area could better explain this and lead to suggestions that might help counselors who work with children whose parents are divorced, separated, or imprisoned.

The results of this survey should be used with caution. It was not a controlled study and people were asked to voluntarily answer the questions. It does provide some insight that perhaps persons with higher ACE scores have a greater probability of becoming involved in the criminal justice system. If this is the case, it would benefit policy makers, funders, and organizations to make sure that children with higher ACE scores are paired with caring adults who can help the children build resiliency. Education and

training for foster parents or others who are raising children are provided with tools to help children navigate the loss of one or both parents in their lives.

ACEs research indicates that ACEs are passed from one generation to another. Therefore, helping people in community corrections to understand ACEs, how to deal with their ACEs, and its potential impact on their children could be a future benefit. Perhaps parenting classes that include ACEs could provide resilience in the children of those in community corrections, thus possibly reducing future societal costs. There are examples of programs that work with single parent families as well as the children of incarcerated parents. The YMCA of Greater Louisville provides such a program for children of incarcerated children. Our Place in New Albany offers two programs for parents going through divorce. Bringing programs like this to Jefferson County could, in the long run, make a difference in the number of people in the criminal justice system. More information on these programs are in the appendix.

## **Appendix**

### **Examples of Programs to Serve Children of Single Parent Homes**

#### **How one Louisville organization is giving youth tools to break the cycle of incarceration**

Matt Reed, Opinion contributor

Amiyah’s father watched her walk for the first time through a plexiglass window in a prison visiting room. Growing up, she witnessed police raids of her home when her father, a drug dealer, was being arrested. Among ongoing domestic arguments and fights between her parents, she watched her father go in and out of prison multiple times.

Eventually, her father was sentenced to 18 years in prison but was later paroled. Her only opportunity to “bond” with him came during a brief two-week period over Christmas when she got to know a sober man who called himself her father. Sadly, he never truly stepped into the role in the way his little girl had hoped he would. Just weeks after that holiday together, he died of a drug overdose.

By having a parent in prison, Amiyah’s chances of ending up in the same place were seven times higher than peers without a parent in prison. But she fought the odds and won — thanks to a program that gave her something most take for granted: a future.

Y-Now, a program of YMCA Safe Place Services, intervened and changed the trajectory of her life, providing access to a mentor, positive role models and peers with shared experiences — the program made Amiyah feel less alone and more determined to build a future that would not follow the steps of her father.

For many young people, the stigma of having a parent in prison leads to shame, blame, bullying, and ridicule. They struggle academically and are reluctant in trusting adults. They are at an increased risk for anxiety, depression, aggression, truancy, substance abuse and attention disorders. That’s why an adult mentor is so critical at this point in their young lives. That’s the key to the program’s success and although mentoring is a considerable commitment — most past mentors say the experience enriched their own lives as well.

The rising rates of crime and violence in Louisville, along with other cities, only adds to the evidence that the cycle of violence, and incarceration, continues. In addition, the pandemic that started in March 2020 only created yet another hurdle and increased isolation from resources.

The pandemic in particular has dealt a harsh blow to youth with at least one parent in prison reducing access to resources for support or guidance. Remote/online learning did not offer the adult support and intervention they desperately needed. Without the guidance of teachers, counselors, coaches and more — children of prisoners were left to fend for themselves, living in a virtual, and emotional, war zone.

Y-Now works specifically with 11-15 year-olds with an incarcerated parent. Because their chances of going to prison are higher than peers without an incarcerated parent, the odds are already stacked against them. Y-Now works to change those odds and does so successfully.

Through mentorship, counseling, peer support and more, Y-Now participants are given the tools to break the cycle of incarceration. They get to see their full potential, often for the first time in their lives. And the program offers strong, compelling results:

- 94% of youth participants receive a high school diploma
- 50% go on to college, secondary education, or full-time work

Amiyah enrolled in Y-Now after her father's death and was given the opportunity to share her story with other youth experiencing the same struggles she faced. Her mentor worked with her to help her remain focused on her academic and personal goals. So grateful for the program's positive impact on her life, she has returned as a youth leader to provide support to another class of youth.

A student at Central High School, she is enrolled in a veterinary program so she can become a vet tech. She plans to remain actively involved with Y-Now so that her experiences can benefit others. She now knows she can become so much more than the cards she was given.

If you or anyone you know is interested in volunteering as a Y-Now mentor, or know of a youth that might benefit from participation, please contact us. The deadline for submission is Sept. 17. Call 502-635-5233 or email [meubank@ymcalouisville.org](mailto:meubank@ymcalouisville.org) for more information.

*Matt Reed is the executive director of YMCA Safe Place Services.*

Source: <https://www.courier-journal.com/story/opinion/2021/09/09/y-now-ymca-program-helps-teens-incarcerated-parents-louisville/5717174001/>.

**Families in Transition** – A program of Our Place Drug and Alcohol Services of New Albany (<https://ourplaceinc.org> )

Separation, divorce and custodial issues are difficult and stressful times of change for parents, taking a toll on them mentally, emotionally, and sometimes physically. That stress can impair their ability to meet the needs of their children, who are also experiencing pain and loss. During this transition, children need time and support from their parents to regain the stability they require to be happy and healthy. The “Families in Transition” (FIT) program is designed to help parents facilitate positive parent-child communication and to help both parents and children cope more effectively with problems resulting from the changes they are facing.

This two-session class fulfills the local courts' requirements to attend an initial parenting seminar, as well as the parent-only class requirement in Jefferson County, KY. Classes will be facilitated by a certified Masters-level instructor. Each parent must attend both classes to receive a certificate and parents cannot register for the same class as the other parent.

All classes are held Online from Our Place, Inc. at 400 East Spring St. in New Albany

Fee includes workbook and Certificate issued at conclusion of the second session (Compatible with Jefferson County, KY's Parent-Only FIT classes)

Please pre-register at least 2 business days prior to the online class to make payment and pick up the workbook. Cost: \$40



For class information please call (812) 945-3400 or email [susanhudson@ourplaceinc.org](mailto:susanhudson@ourplaceinc.org) to sign up.

**New Beginnings** - A program of Our Place Drug and Alcohol Services of New Albany

The New Beginnings Program (NBP) is a longer program for parents who want more information and support as they parent their children through a troubling event such as divorce, separation, or custody issues.

The NBP assists parents in restructuring their family with skills that help strengthen their bonds with their children so the children feel valued and important as members of their new family unit.

We welcome parents who voluntarily choose to take the class, as well as those who are court-ordered to attend.

Parents will have the opportunity to learn and practice skills to improve the quality of the parent-child relationship, the effectiveness of discipline, and reduce exposure to parental conflict, all of which support healthy child development.

- The program format consists of 10 weekly 2-hour group sessions meeting at Our Place, located at 400 E. Spring Street in New Albany.
- Parents will be scheduled for an intake appointment to meet the group leader, receive program information and complete a child behavior checklist for each child. This checklist will be completed again upon the program's completion to help document the program's effectiveness.
- Each session consists of a short presentation, skill demonstration, and opportunities to practice the skill presented. Master's level professionals lead each group.
- The program will be offered to mothers and fathers in separate groups.
- Please call (812-945-3400, ext. 110) or [email](#) for the next session of this program. The Mother's group typically meets on Wednesdays from 4:00-6:00 p.m. and the Father's group on Thursdays from 4:00-6:00 p.m.
- Because this program is partially grant-funded through DMHA\* at this time, parents are responsible only for the cost of the ten workbooks (\$65).

This program will develop the skills of the parents to increase the child's bond with that parent and increase their feelings of security. The parents learn how to model positive parenting skills impacting that child's development, which will continue even into early adulthood - and ultimately that child's parenting skills, which impacts the next generation as well!

Our Place serves Floyd, Clark, Harrison, Scott, and Washington counties with offices in New Albany