

The Lifelong Impact of Trauma on a Child's Well-Being

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Having served the majority of my career in healthcare, I am well aware of the challenges patients and those who care for them experience. In today's world the overall well-being of all involved is a growing quiet public health issue.

Well-being – the overall health and life satisfaction one exemplifies, including mental and physical health, a resource for life affected by social, economic and environmental factors at all stages of life. When those environmental factors – home life- are not at their best, everyone suffers, not the least of which are children in such worlds who live then with the results of trauma.

As early as the late 1990's researchers began to establish the impact of trauma as the result of sexual, physical or emotional abuse on the development of children and on their future physical health risks. The Adverse Children Event study determined that the risk of future substance abuse and mental health related illnesses like anxiety and depression increased. But also increased are the risks of chronic and/or other physical ailments including pulmonary issues, stroke, cardiovascular risks, cancer and diabetes.

Researchers in subsequent years have continued validating the study with more than 17,000 participants to determine interventions to reverse the effects of such trauma. Childhood trauma is a public health challenge and fortunately in Adams County, we have the Adams County Children's Advocacy Center (ACCAC) to help. Established in 2006, the ACCAC serves more than 200 children each year who are victims of abuse and has a team of family and child advocates who serve their needs.

While helping these children is a critical community service, preventing physical or emotional adverse actions is a role we can each play to reduce the impact of trauma in the first place. The ACCAC has grown to include preventative efforts and offers various community education programs for children and adults. Research has shown that when at least 5 % of a population is aware and engaged in prevention, the cases of actual abuse and resulting trauma decrease.

- Join us in the 5% challenge and reach out to the ACCAC for a program of learning.
- Be aware of the signs of possible abuse and report such matters or seek guidance by calling Child Line at 800-932-0313.
- Help the ACCAC team heal those in need and by engaging in learning and advocacy, prevent more trauma among our children who become the adults of our communities in the future.

We can all make a difference by being attentive to the reduction of trauma in our children. We can give attention, raise awareness and take action to the public health issue of child abuse and support the well-being of parents and children in our communities. The ACCAC is a valuable resource to lead us in doing such important work.

You can also support the ACCAC in offering these services at no charge to families and their important preventative work in Building Brighter Tomorrows for Adams County children by supporting ACCAC, #7 in the 2024 Adams County Community Foundation Giving Spree.