

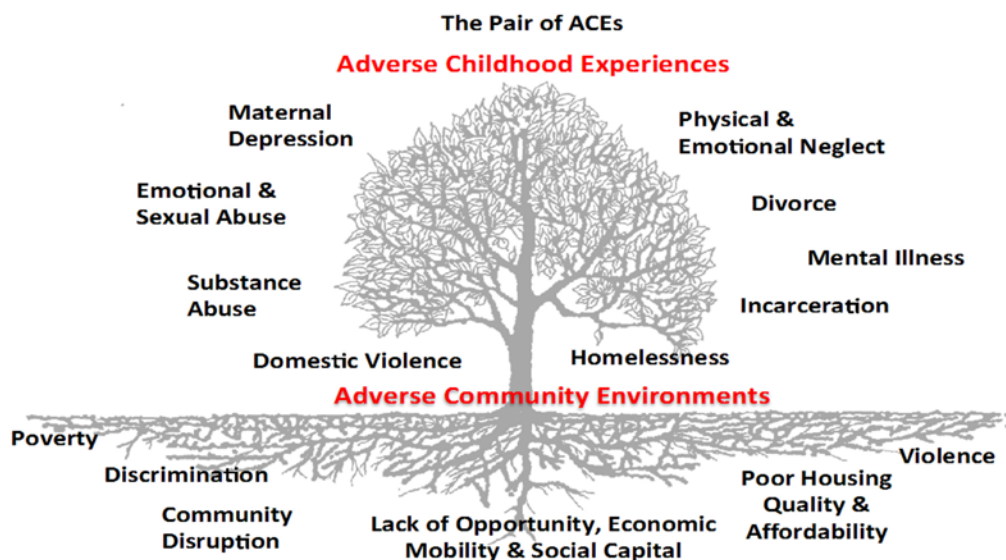


## Pair of ACEs Tree

### Background

The BCR Pair of ACEs tree image grew out of the need to illustrate the relationship between adversity within a family and adversity within a community. The leaves on the tree represent the ‘symptoms’ of ACEs that are easily recognized in clinical, educational and social service settings, such as a well child visit or a pre-school classroom. Adverse childhood experiences can increase a person’s risk for chronic stress and adverse coping mechanisms, and result in lifelong chronic illness such as depression, heart disease, obesity and substance abuse. Physical or sexual violence, and abuse or neglect are often less obvious but can exist as chronic stressors.

The tree is planted in poor soil that is steeped in systemic inequities, robbing it of nutrients necessary to support a thriving community. Adverse community environments such as a lack of affordable and safe housing, community violence, systemic discrimination, and limited access to social and economic mobility compound one another, creating a negative cycle of ever worsening soil that results in withering leaves on the tree.



Ellis, W., Dietz, W. (2017) A New Framework for Addressing Adverse Childhood and Community Experiences: The Building Community Resilience (BCR) Model. *Academic Pediatrics*. 17 (2017) pp. S86-S93. DOI information: 10.1016/j.acap.2016.12.011

### Purpose

The Pair of ACEs tree resource was created to communicate – in simple terms – the issues we aim to address. By doing so, we are able to more readily engage diverse stakeholders in developing policy goals—policies that will support efforts to address adversity that is embedded in communities, but have their roots in systems. The way you talk about this tree can be customized to fit your community needs so that you may build tailored, clear and concise communications to move the systems

and practice change forward. In the policy arena, the Pair of ACEs tree illustrates the problem you are trying to solve, but also provides a framework to begin to discuss how you may measure efforts designed to solve the problem.

## Success Stories

BCR partners across the country are successfully using the Pair of ACEs tree and other BCR communications tools and strategies to engage partners. Together, these communities are setting goals and implementing policy and practice change that builds community resilience.

- The Dallas BCR coalition is working across Dallas to improve the health and wellbeing of children and their families. They are using BCR tools and strategies to pilot test community-based approaches for addressing the Pair of ACEs in South Dallas. At the same time, they are working closely with city leaders at the systems level to address ACEs in the community.
- Keep Oregon Well is the statewide mental health campaign of Trillium Family Services and one of the BCR Oregon initiatives. The coalitions' other activities include efforts to build a trauma-informed culture at The Faubion School. In addition to their work in serving some of Portland's most vulnerable children, Trillium Family Services has been an effective advocate with the state legislature on behalf of providers and the families they serve. Trillium has used a number of BCR strategies to communicate across a wide range of community partners in its ongoing effort to spark change at the community level.
- Joining Forces for Children (JfFC), the Cincinnati BCR coalition led by Cincinnati Children's Hospital relies on the strength of its partners to reach collective impact. From policy advocates and health care directors to home health workers and community leaders, the diverse partnership is positioned to prevent and reduce the trauma associated with adverse childhood experiences across the Tri-State region. JfFC used BCR communications strategies to identify specific stakeholders and the develop messaging to galvanize this network of partners in efforts to address and prevent childhood adversity.

Read more about BCR coalitions at [go.gwu.edu/BCR](http://go.gwu.edu/BCR).



Milken Institute School  
of Public Health  
THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Sumner M. Redstone  
Global Center for  
Prevention & Wellness

### Contact Us

**Wendy Ellis, Co-PI**  
Building Community Resilience  
[wendye@gwu.edu](mailto:wendye@gwu.edu)

**Bill Dietz, Co-PI**  
Building Community Resilience  
[bdietz@gwu.edu](mailto:bdietz@gwu.edu)