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## **New Data Show 55 Percent of Shelby County Adults Experienced a Traumatic Event During Childhood**

*Survey reveals prevalence of substance abuse, violence in the home, underscores need for newly announced 'Universal Parenting Places'*

**Memphis, Tenn.** – The ACE Center Task Force of Shelby County today released new data showing a direct link between chronic exposure to traumatic events throughout childhood, known as “adverse childhood experiences” or “ACEs,” and negative behaviors and health conditions as adults. The group also unveiled a first-of-its-kind parenting resource intended to prevent those traumatic childhood experiences called “Universal Parenting Places.”

According to the Task Force report, “Adverse Childhood Experiences in Shelby County Tennessee,” adults of all races and ethnicities report having experienced ACEs. For the purpose of the survey, ACEs include abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction.

Decades of neuroscience and trauma research indicate that adverse experiences during childhood literally change the composition of the brain, often resulting in violence, aggression, addiction, depression and chronic diseases.

The Shelby County ACE data was released before more than 200 state and county leaders, and health and education stakeholders at today’s community forum, “Getting to Our Roots: Transforming Our Community Through Families.” The event featured Vincent J. Felitti, M.D., Co-Principal Investigator of the original ACE Study conducted in 1995 in San Diego, and Robin Karr-Morse, the visionary behind the county’s newly announced “Universal Parenting Places.”

The data were collected through a confidential, random telephone survey of more than 1,500 adults throughout Shelby County. The Philadelphia-based Public Health Management Corporation conducted the survey in the summer of 2014.

“There is no denying all members of our community face trauma in a number of ways, in varying levels,” said Barbara H. Nixon, early childhood consultant and Task Force co-founder. “To bring about meaningful change, we must look to and address the root causes of these behaviors—and many of those roots are cultivated by childhood distress.”

### **Additional key findings include:**

- The most prevalent ACE factor in Shelby County is household substance abuse (25%), followed by emotional or verbal abuse (23%), followed by violence between adults in the home (22%).

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- Fifty-two percent of the adult population reported having experienced at least one ACE. One in five adults experienced two to three ACEs (21%) and 12% of adults experienced four or more ACEs.
- Information collected on additional traumatic childhood experiences shows 37% of adults in Shelby County have witnessed a shooting or stabbing, and 41% of adults were bullied as children.
- Compared to adults with an ACE score of zero, adults in Shelby County with four or more ACEs were 21 times more likely to have tried to commit suicide.
- Adults in Shelby County were more likely to experience certain ACEs than adults in the rest of Tennessee or across the nation.

The Task Force says it intends for this data to spark a conversation about the importance of preventing adverse childhood experiences, which is why the group also announced today the nation's first Universal Parenting Places (UPP).

UPPs will provide parents with access to professional resources to address behavioral challenges at the earliest possible point in their children's development. The pilot parenting sites will launch in the first quarter of 2015, and will be open to all families who want to reduce stress and trauma in their families.

“When it comes to parenting, all of us are vulnerable and any of our children can be at risk,” Karr-Morse said. “What makes the difference is the availability of support – how soon we get it, the quality of the answers we get, and how quickly we can put that information to work to build health and interrupt destructive patterns.”

Universal Parenting Places are a collaboration of community partners, including Baptist Memorial Hospital for Women, Knowledge Quest, and Porter Leath. UPP grand openings will be announced soon. Learn more at [www.shelbycountyupp.com](http://www.shelbycountyupp.com).

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#### **About the ACE Center Task Force of Shelby County**

The ACE Center Task Force of Shelby County is a team of more than 50 local leaders dedicated to transforming the way our medical systems and policies address health and behavioral outcomes for all citizens. Learn more at [www.acecentershelbycounty.com](http://www.acecentershelbycounty.com).

**View the Study:** <http://bit.ly/ACEShelbySurvey>

**View the Executive Summary:** <http://bit.ly/ACEShelbySummary>