

# Childhood trauma Changing minds.™

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## What can juvenile and family courts do to respond to trauma?

To promote healing and avoid re-traumatization, judges and allied child-serving professionals should understand the impact of exposure to violence on human development.

### Violence

is behavior involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

### Traumatic Event

is an experience that causes physical, emotional, psychological distress, or harm.

### Traumatic Stress

occurs when someone is exposed to traumatic events, and when this exposure overwhelms his or her ability to cope with what has been experienced.

### Adversity

involves potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on one's health and well-being.

### Resiliency

is the capacity to thrive in the face of adversity.

### Challenging Behavior

is only the tip of the iceberg...



Compared to the general youth population, juvenile justice-involved youth have been shown to have **higher** prevalence rates of adversity and trauma.

## Types of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)™

### Abuse



Physical

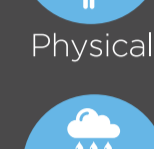


Psychological



Sexual

### Neglect



Physical



Psychological

### Household Dysfunction



Mental Illness



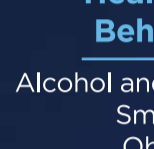
Incarcerated Parent



Domestic Violence



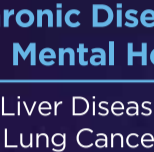
Substance Abuse



Divorce

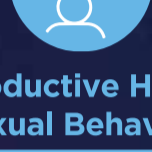
Research suggests that the risk for numerous health issues **increases** as an individual's number of ACEs increases.

### Some of these health issues include:



**Chronic Disease and Mental Health**

Liver Disease  
Lung Cancer  
Depression



**Reproductive Health/ Sexual Behavior**

Fetal Death  
Sexually Transmitted Diseases  
Adolescent Pregnancy



**Health Risk Behaviors**

Alcohol and Drug Abuse  
Smoking  
Obesity



**Risk of Intimate Partner Violence**

As many as **one-third**

of juvenile justice-involved youth reported exposure to multiple forms of trauma each year!

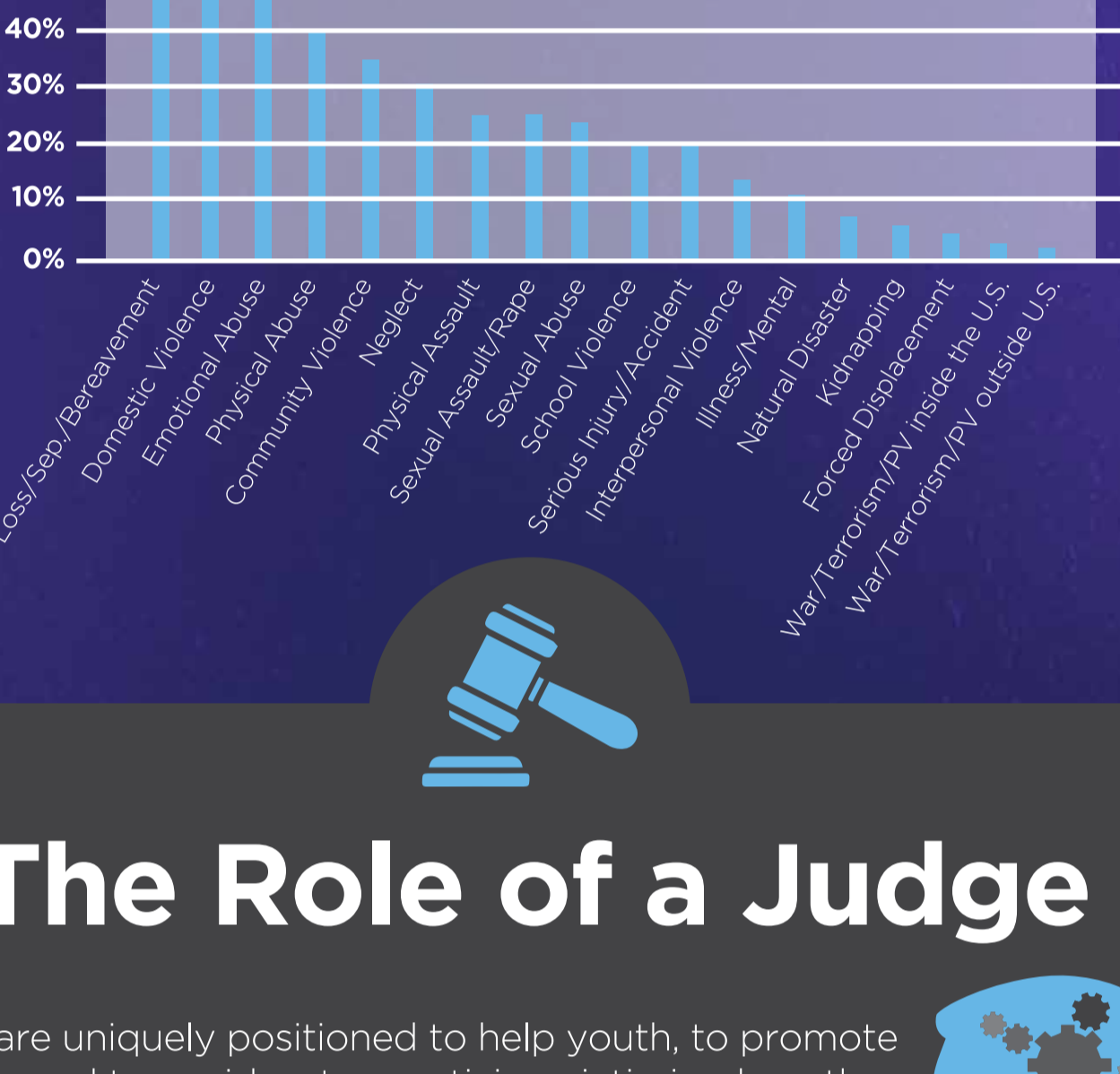
Juvenile offenders with **higher**

ACEs scores demonstrated more substance abuse, self-harm behaviors, and school-related problems.ii



**On average, female juvenile offenders reported more ACEs than their male counterparts.v**

## Prevalence Rates of Trauma Exposure by Trauma Type



## The Role of a Judge

Judges are uniquely positioned to help youth, to promote healing, and to avoid re-traumatizing victimized youth. Judges can create a culture and community of healing.



## Judges should consider

HOW DID YOU GET HERE AND HOW CAN I HELP?

HOW CAN I LEAD A CULTURE AND COMMUNITY OF HEALING?

## Judges can promote



**Safety**



**Healing**



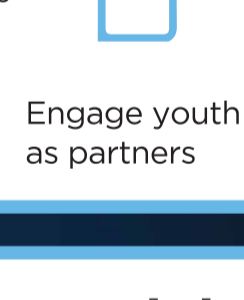
**Self Determination**



**Pro-social Connections**

## Judges can build

a trauma-informed juvenile and family court



### Improve Systems



Be aware of your biases



Support and educate staff on trauma (including secondary trauma)



Work with stakeholders



Develop and implement policy and protocols

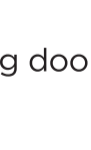


Engage youth and parents as partners

### Seek to Understand the Whole Story



Identify the strengths and challenges of each family



Scrutinize how parents and children are labeled



Ask social workers and attorneys tough questions (See NCTSN bench cardsiv for examples)



Acknowledge that the context in which an event occurs matters



Celebrate strengths by using "put-ups," not "put-downs"

### Identify Environmental Triggers



Harsh lighting



Slamming doors



Extreme temperature



Loudspeakers



Traffic



Shouting

### Create Child- and Family-friendly Courtrooms

Safety involves social, emotional, psychological, and physical needs



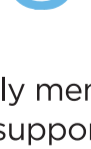
Create a child and family-friendly courtroom



Provide appropriate educational materials and signage



Dedicate safe spaces for victims



Ensure accessibility



Be cognizant of your body language, tone and demeanor



Invite advocates to be part of the conversation



Ensure comfort by staying calm and patient



Collaborate by asking all parties for their opinions

### Be Thoughtful About Services



Identify the evidence-based treatment services in your community



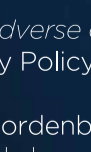
Work with your community to fill service gaps



Use targeted services; do not overload families with services

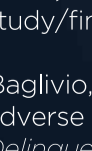


Ensure services are responsive to families' needs and culturally-sensitive

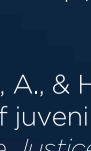


Help family members maintain safe and supportive relationships

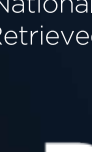
### Nurture Voice and Choice



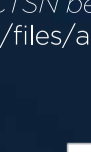
Empower children, youth and families to make safe and healthy choices



Allow children and youth to voice their opinions throughout the process



Build on protective factors (i.e., cultural values and support systems)



Acknowledge resiliency (i.e., existing strengths and accomplishments)



Listen and show an interest in the passions of children and youth



Inspire and expose children and youth to new ideas

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Dierkhising, C. B., Ko, S. J., Woods-Jaeger, B., Briggs, E. C., Lee, R., & Pynoos, R. S. (2013). Trauma histories among justice-involved youth: Findings from the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 4. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3402/ejpt.v4i0.20274>.

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viii National Child Traumatic Stress Network. (n.d.). *NCTSN bench card for the trauma-informed judge*. Retrieved from [http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/judge\\_bench\\_cards\\_final.pdf](http://www.nctsn.org/sites/default/files/assets/pdfs/judge_bench_cards_final.pdf).

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**FUTURE'S WITHOUT VIOLENCE**

**NCTSN**  
est. 1997

NATIONAL COUNCIL OF JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES

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