

# A PEDIATRICIAN'S GUIDE TO USING THE WHOLE CHILD ASSESSMENT (WCA)

## #1 Use the WCA to guide the history

- Follow-up flagged (right-side) high risk responses
- Follow-up “unsure” responses

## #2 Notice who completed the form

## #3 Review domains in suggested order

- Interval history then to
- Safety then
- Substances...

## #4 Use opportunities to counsel on resilience

- Advise that meeting basic needs starts with establishing a feeling of safety at home
- Support caregiver resilience (self-care)
- Praise patient & family strengths
- Encourage social connections for the whole family
- Focus parenting on the development of safe, stable and nurturing relationships

## #5 Address Safety Concerns First

ACE-questions	Suggested responses
On average, how difficult was it for your family to meet expenses for basic needs like food, clothing, and housing in the <b>last year</b> ?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Is there any help you would like today?”</li> <li>• Share basic need resources.e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> </ul>
Has your child <b>ever</b> lived with a parent or other adult who physically hurt the child in anger?  <b>Relationships:</b> Do you know or are you concerned that anyone touched your child, or forced your child to touch that person, in a sexual way?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Can you tell me more about this?”</li> <li>• If <b>current</b>- safety plan and CPSreport if concern for child safety</li> <li>• If <b>past</b>- “Many children see or experience violence in the home. It is important to know that no one deserves abuse. It is also important to know that there are things you can do to help your child overcome challenging experiences. May I share some additional info? e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> </ul>
Has your child (as a baby or when older) <b>ever</b> seen or heard adults in the home pushing, hitting, kicking, <b>OR</b> physically threatening each other?	

## #6 Address Substance Use& Mental Health

ACE-questions	Suggested responses
Did a parent or household member <b>ever</b> have a problem with drugs <b>OR</b> alcohol?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Can you tell me more about this?”</li> <li>• “How has this (alcohol or drug use) impacted your relationship with your child?”</li> <li>• If <b>past or current treatment</b> affirm</li> <li>• If <b>current</b> concern, “Substance use problems are common and can affect the whole family. May I share some additional info?”e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> </ul>
In the past year, how many times have you had 4 or more drinks containing alcohol in <b>one day</b> ?	
Over the past <b>2 weeks</b> , how often have you been bothered by .. <b>PHQ2</b> (depression, <b>GAD2</b> (anxiety) For Caregiver age 0-11, Adolescent 12-17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Can you tell me more about this?”</li> <li>• If <b>past or current treatment</b> affirm</li> <li>• If <b>current</b> concern, “Taking care of your health is important to taking care of your child’s health. May I share some additional info?” e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> </ul>
Was a parent or household member <b>ever</b> depressed, mentally ill, <b>OR</b> suicidal?	

## #7 Address Relationships

ACE-questions	Suggested responses
Did a parent or household member get arrested, deported, go to prison, jail, or another correctional facility during your child’s lifetime?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Normalize the need for support “Parenting is a big job to do on your own. Where do you get help when you need it?”</li> <li>• Share parenting resources.e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> </ul>
Does your family look out for each other, feel close to each other, and support each other?	
Are your child’s parents separated, divorced, or not living together?	
Do you find you need to hit or spank your child?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage healthy strategies for stress management- “All parents feel stressed and challenged by their children at different times. What do you do when you are feeling stressed</li> <li>• Share parenting resources.e.g. <b>ACES smart text</b></li> <li>• Review <b>lifestyle</b> (sleep, exercise, nutrition, dental) to emphasize additional strategies for stress management</li> </ul>
Do you find you need to shout or yell at your child?	
Do you feel your child is difficult to take care of?	

## #8 Consider Diagnoses (& maybe Problem List)

GENERAL	Stress at home	F43.9	RELATIONSHIPS	History of sexual abuse in childhood	Z62.810
	Caregiver stress/mental healthx	Z63.6		Incarceration/parent or household member	Z65.1
	In foster care	Z62.21		History of neglect in child,unloved, uncared for	Z62.812
<b>SAFETY</b>	Exposure of child to domestic violence ( <b>CONFIDENTIAL</b> )	Z63.8		Problem related to primary support group/family never close	Z63.8
	History of physical abuse in childhood	Z62.819		Parent-child conflict or relational problem/child difficult, yell or spank	Z62.82
<b>SUBSTANCES</b>	Screening for alcohol problem/more than 4 drinks in a day	Z13.39			
	Alcoholism or Alcoholism and drug addiction in family	Z63.72			
<b>MENTAL HEALTH</b>	Family history depression	Z81.8			

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For scoring and references, see: <https://luch.org/health-professionals/whole-child-assessment-wca>