

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

#1 Use the WCA to guide the history

- Ask about “unsure” responses to assess risk
- Discuss flagged (right-column) high risk responses to assess safety, affirm strengths, and promote resilience

#2 Notice who completed the form

- Who lives at home? i.e. what is the family context for child's development & growth?

#3 Review domains in numbered order

1. Interval history, then
2. Safety, then
3. Substances, then... 10. Tuberculosis

#4 Use questions about ACEs to counsel on resilience

- Acknowledge that ACEs are challenging or stressful;
Ask about family strengths and help needed;
Provide information and support to build family resilience
- Encourage caregiver resilience (self-care) and social connections for the whole family
- Focus parenting on safe, stable and nurturing relationships

#5 Address Safety Concerns First:

ACE Questions and Suggested Initial Responses

- On average, how difficult was it for your family to meet expenses for basic needs like food, clothing, and housing in the **last year**?
 - *“Is there any help you would like today?”*
 - *Share basic need resources e.g. **ACES smart text***
- Has your child **ever** lived with a parent or other adult who physically hurt the child in anger?
- **Relationships:** Do you know or are you concerned that anyone touched your child, or forced your child to touch that person, in a sexual way?
- Has your child (as a baby or when older) **ever** seen or heard adults in the home pushing, hitting, kicking, **OR** physically threatening each other?
 - *“Can you tell me more about this?”*
 - *If **current safety concern**- safety plan and CPS report*
 - *If **past safety concern**- “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. **ACES smart text***

#6 Address Substance Use & Mental Health

ACE Questions and Suggested Initial Responses

- Did a parent or household member ever have a problem with drugs OR alcohol?
- In the past year, how many times have **you** had 4 or more drinks containing alcohol **in one day**?
 - *“Can you tell me more about this?”*
 - *“How has this (alcohol or drug use) impacted your relationship with your child?”*
 - *If **past or current treatment**, affirm*
 - *If **current concern**, “Substance use problems are common and can affect the whole family. May I share some additional info?” e.g. **ACES and/or Stress smart text***

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- **For Caregiver age 0-11:** Over the past 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by .. PHQ2 (depression), GAD2 (anxiety)
- Was a parent or household member ever depressed, mentally ill, OR suicidal?
 - *"Can you tell me more about this?" OR "Parenting can be stressful. What do you do to manage stress?"*
 - **If past or current treatment, affirm**
 - **If current concern, "Taking care of your health is important to taking care of your child's health. May I share some additional info?" e.g. ACEs and/or Stress smart text**

#7 Support Healthy Relationships

ACE Questions and Suggested Initial Responses

- Did a parent or household member get arrested, deported, go to prison, jail, or another correctional facility during your child's lifetime?
- 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?
 - *Normalize the need for support- "Parenting is a big job to do on your own. Where do you get help when you need it?"*
 - *Share parenting resources e.g. ACEs and/or Stress and/or Relationships smart text*
- Do you find you need to hit or spank your child?
- Do you find you need to shout or yell at your child?
- Do you feel your child is difficult to take care of?
 - *"Can you give me an example of what is happening when you need to spank or yell?"*
 - *Acknowledge that misbehavior can be frustrating then emphasize aspects of creating healthy relationships at home such as shifting from blame to understanding, modeling stress management, showing listening ("it sounds like...") and expressing love*
 - *Share parenting resources e.g. ACEs and/or Stress and/or Relationships smart text*
 - *Review **lifestyle** (sleep, exercise, nutrition, dental) to emphasize additional healthy strategies for stress management and positive relationships*

#8 Consider Referrals

- Reasons to refer for ACEs
 - ✓ **Need-based:** family expresses interest in support e.g. for socioeconomic needs or help accessing treatment for caregiver and/or child
 - ✓ **Time-based:** you wish you had more time to assess and support family
 - ✓ **Risk-based:** you have a current concern for child maltreatment or risk of maltreatment, household violence, caregiver alcohol and/or drug abuse, caregiver mental health
- DO NOT refer based upon ACE score alone
- Diagnoses to use for referral (and consider adding to problem list)
 - **General:** Stress at home (F43.9), Caregiver stress/mental health symptoms (Z63.6), In foster care (Z62.21)
 - **Safety:** Exposure of child to domestic violence (Z63.8, confidential), History of physical abuse in childhood (Z62.619)
 - **Substances:** Screening for alcohol problem (Z13.39), Alcoholism or Alcoholism and drug addition in family (Z63.72)
 - **Mental health:** Family history depression (Z81.8)
 - **Relationships:** History of sexual abuse in childhood (Z62.810), Incarceration (Z65.1), History of neglect in childhood (Z62.812), Problem related to primary support group (Z63.8), Family estrangement (Z63.5), Parent-child conflict or relational problem (Z62.82)