

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Research: Extension, Integration & Implications

Heather Larkin, PhD, LCSW-R
Assistant Professor, University at Albany

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

The largest study of its kind ever done to examine the health and social effects of adverse childhood experiences over the lifespan (Felitti & Anda)



- Experiences while growing up that deeply impact a young person and profoundly affect emotional and physical health later in life.



(Thank you to Vincent Felitti for slides)

Categories of Adverse Childhood Experiences

Abuse, by Category

	Category	Prevalence (%)
• Psychological (by parents)		11%
• Physical (by parents)		11%
• Sexual (anyone)		22%

Household Dysfunction, by Category

• Substance Abuse in family		26%
• Mental Illness in family		19%
• Domestic Violence		13%
• Imprisoned Household Member		3%
• Loss of parent		23%

Adverse Childhood Experiences Score

Number of categories of childhood experiences are summed

ACE Score

Prevalence (after Wave 2)

0	33%
1	25%
2	15%
3	10%
4	6%
5 or more	11%



- Approximately *two-thirds* have at least one ACE
- More than *one-third* have experienced 2 – 4 ACE categories

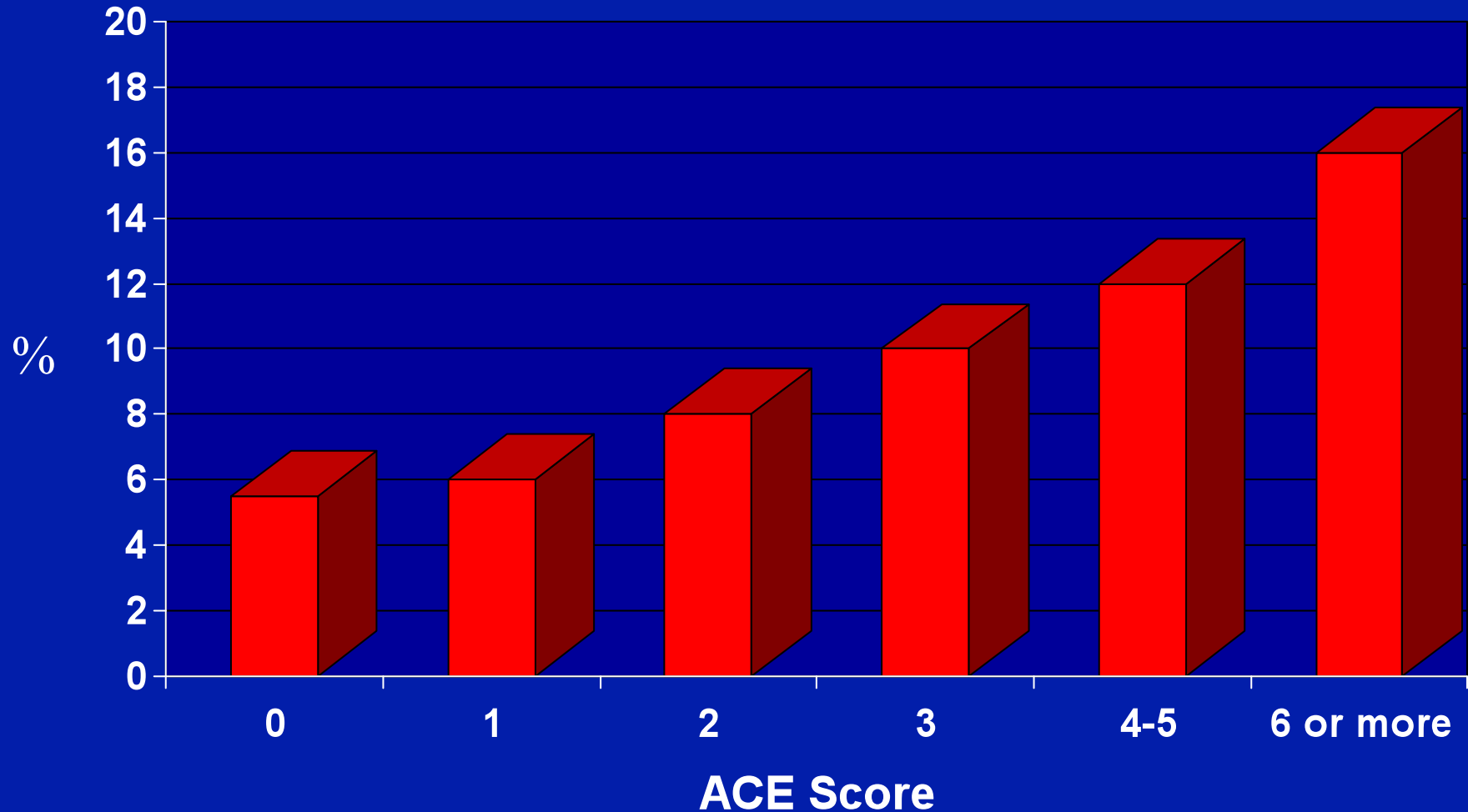
The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

Summary of Findings:

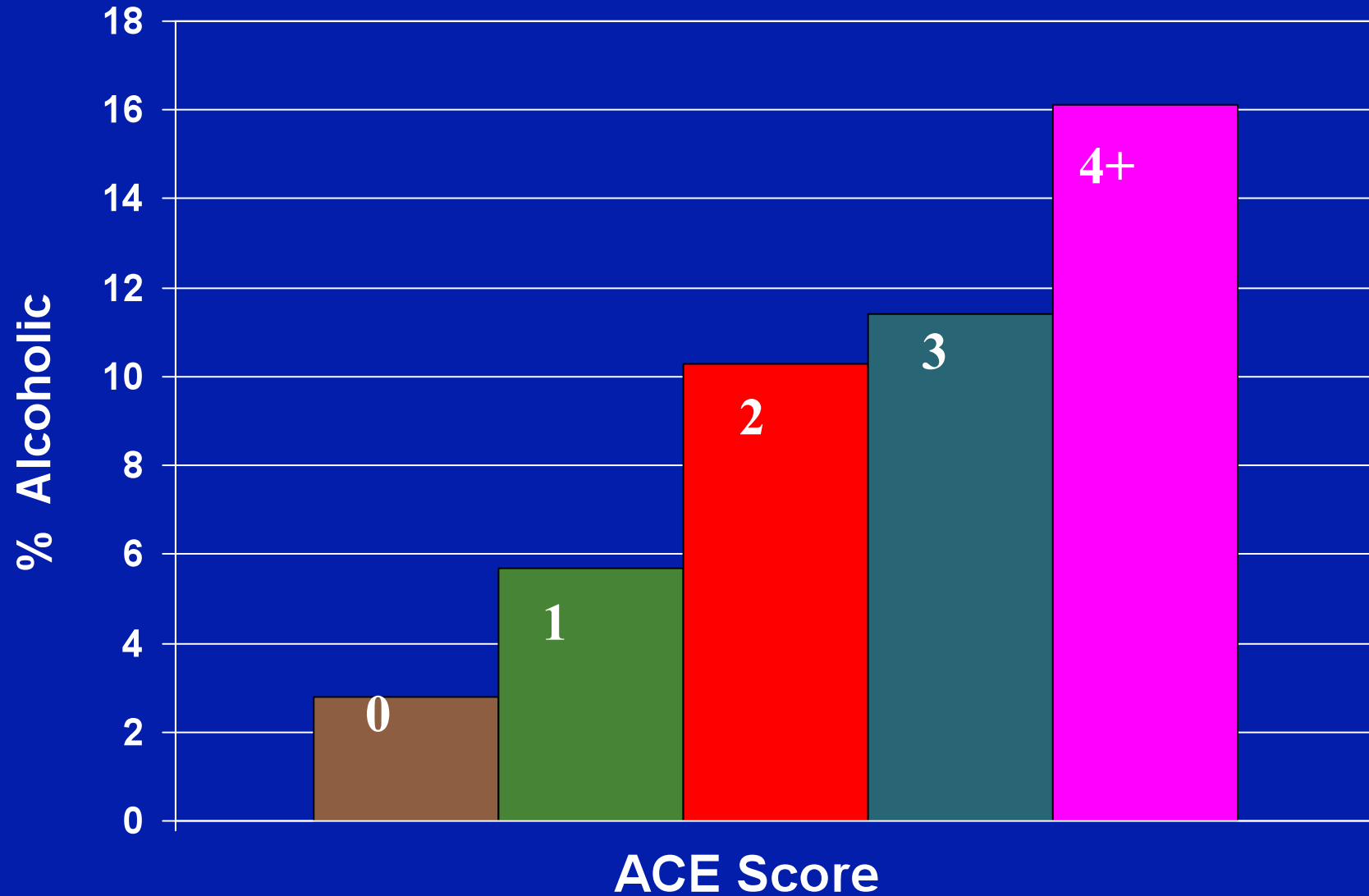
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are very common
- ACEs are strong predictors of adult health risks and disease
- ACEs are implicated in *the 10 leading causes of death in the U.S.!*
- “I was actually stunned and I wept over what I saw.” ACEs researcher Rob Anda, M.D.
- **Virtually every study shows that ACEs are strong predictors of homelessness (Burt, 2001)**



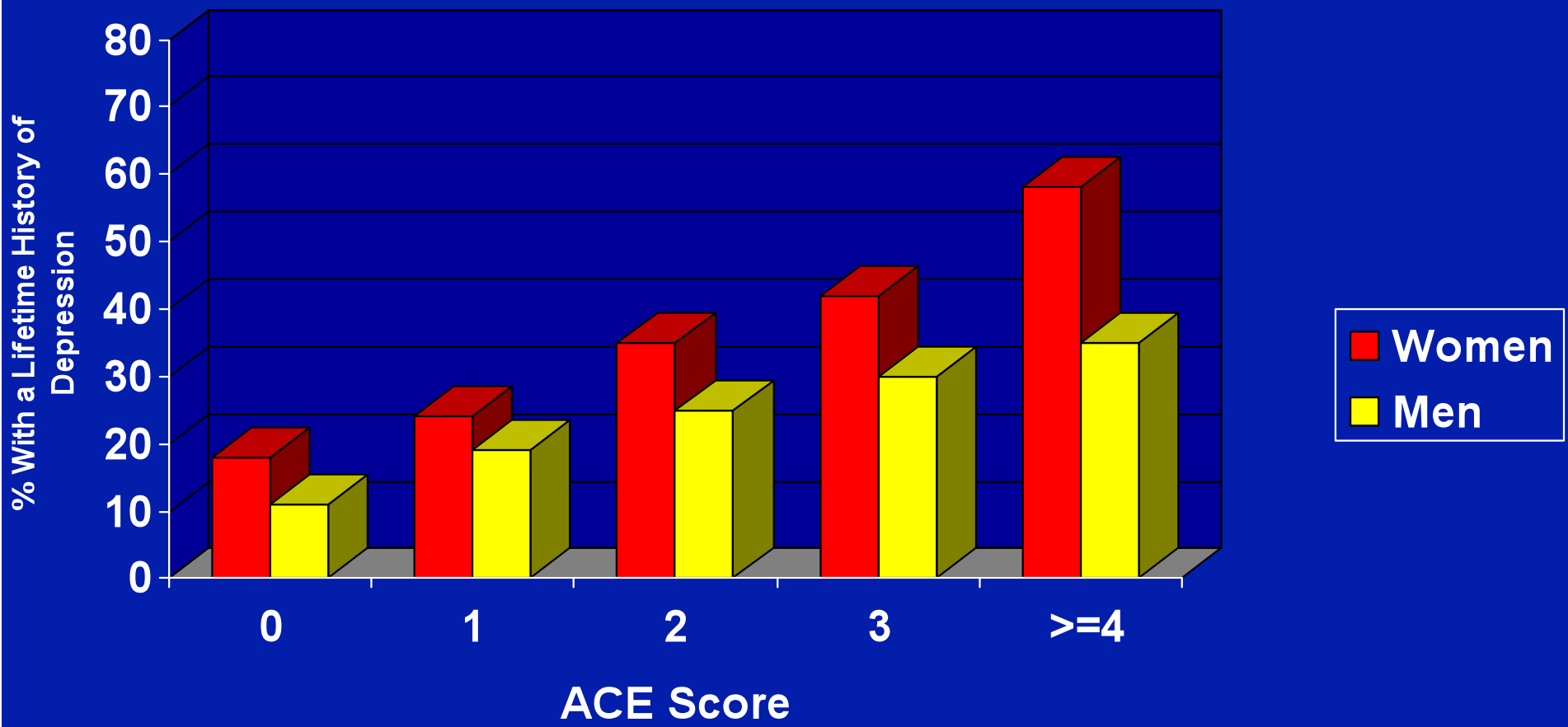
Adverse Childhood Experiences and Current Smoking



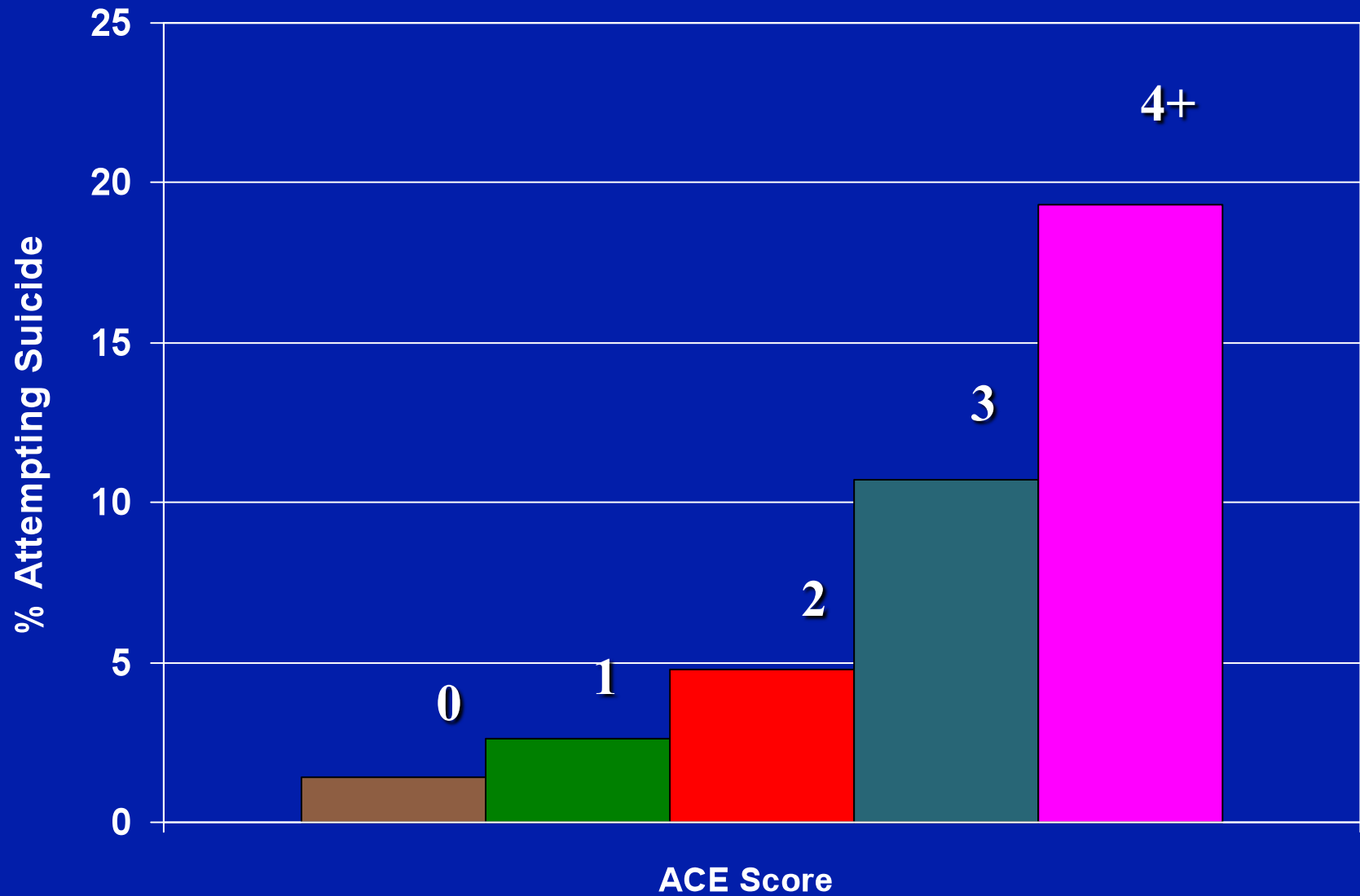
Childhood Experiences and Adult Alcoholism



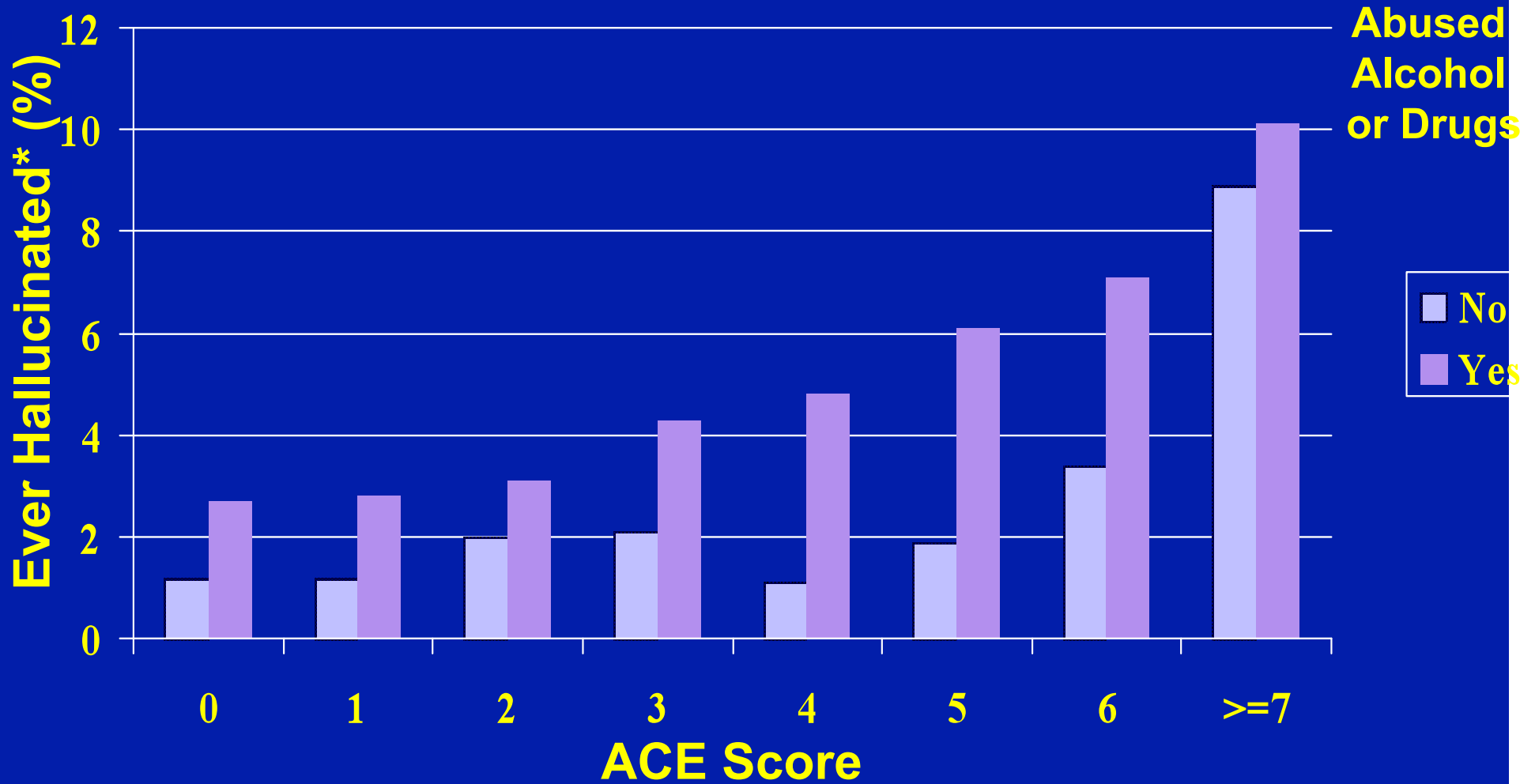
Childhood Experiences Underlie Chronic Depression



Childhood Experiences Underlie Suicide

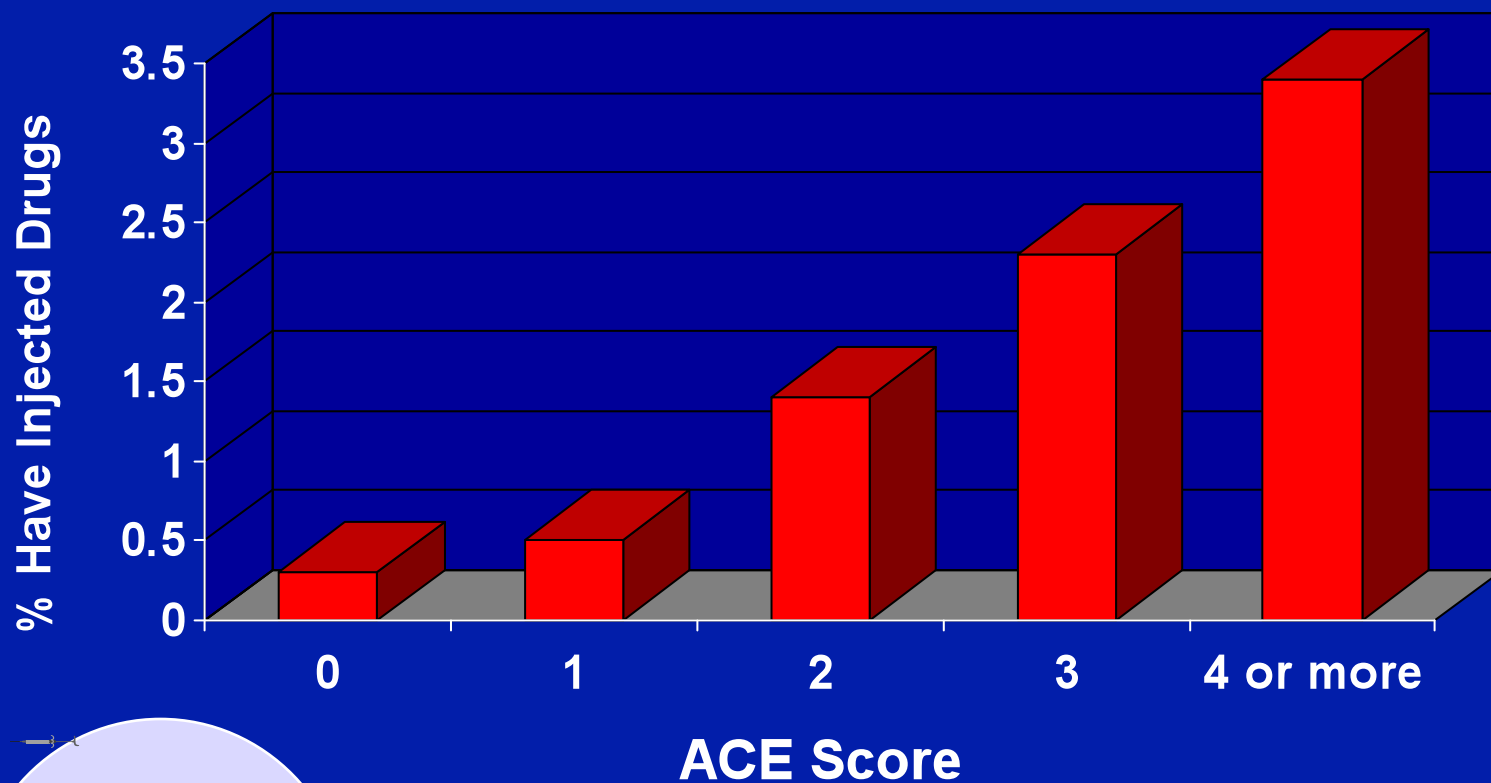


ACE Score and Hallucinations



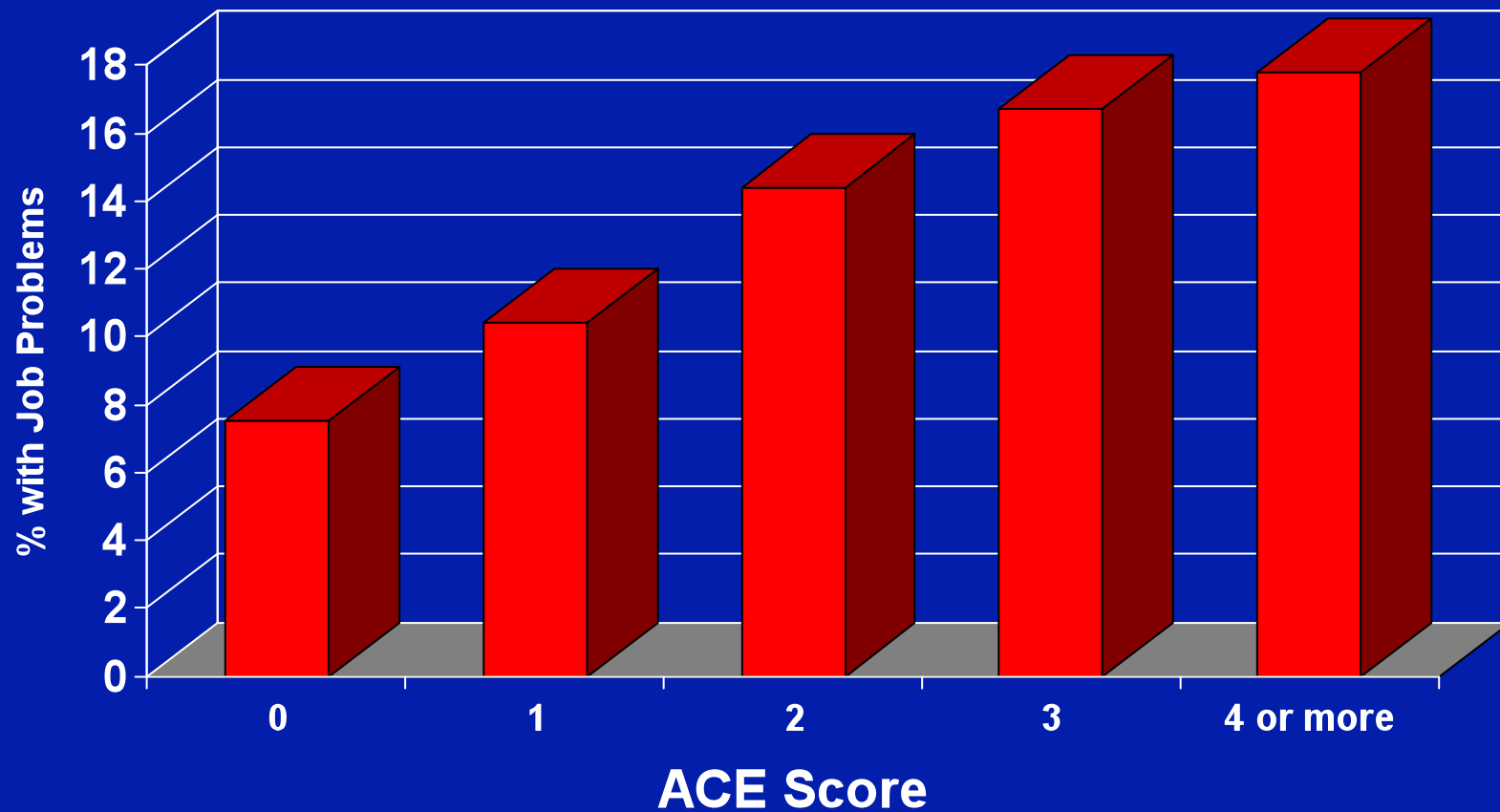
*Adjusted for age, sex, race, and education.

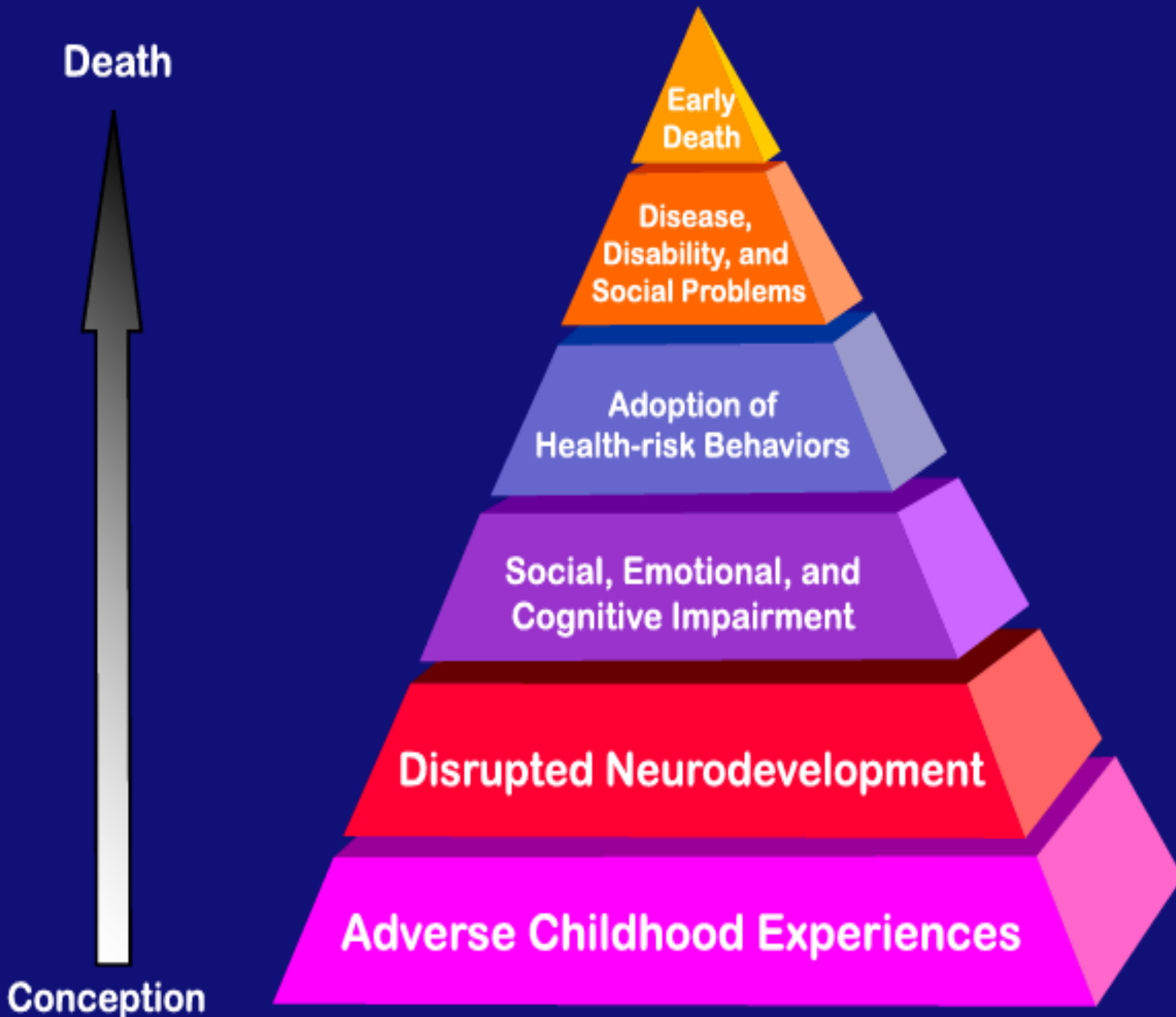
ACE Score and Intravenous Drug Use



N = 8,022 **p < 0.001**

ACE Score and Serious Job Problems





Mechanisms by Which Adverse Childhood Experiences Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan

A Connection with Homelessness

- Mental illness and substance abuse problems are more common among homeless people
- ACEs connection to substance abuse and mental illness
- Even non-homeless people with either substance abuse problems or mental illness are less likely to hold a job

University at Albany School of Social Welfare: ACE Response

- Enhance our understanding of ACEs
- Integrate with literature on resiliency and protective factors
- Prevention and Intervention for each ACE outcome
- Support systems transformation

Person-in-Environment: A complex interplay of risk and resources

ACE impact on developing self (overwhelming feelings, activation of defense mechanisms, etc.)

Health Risk Behaviors (substance abuse, sexual and other risk-taking, etc.)
Medical problems (both short & long-term)
Changes in developing brain

INDIVIDUAL

COLLECTIVE

Family meanings
Cultural values
Social taboos

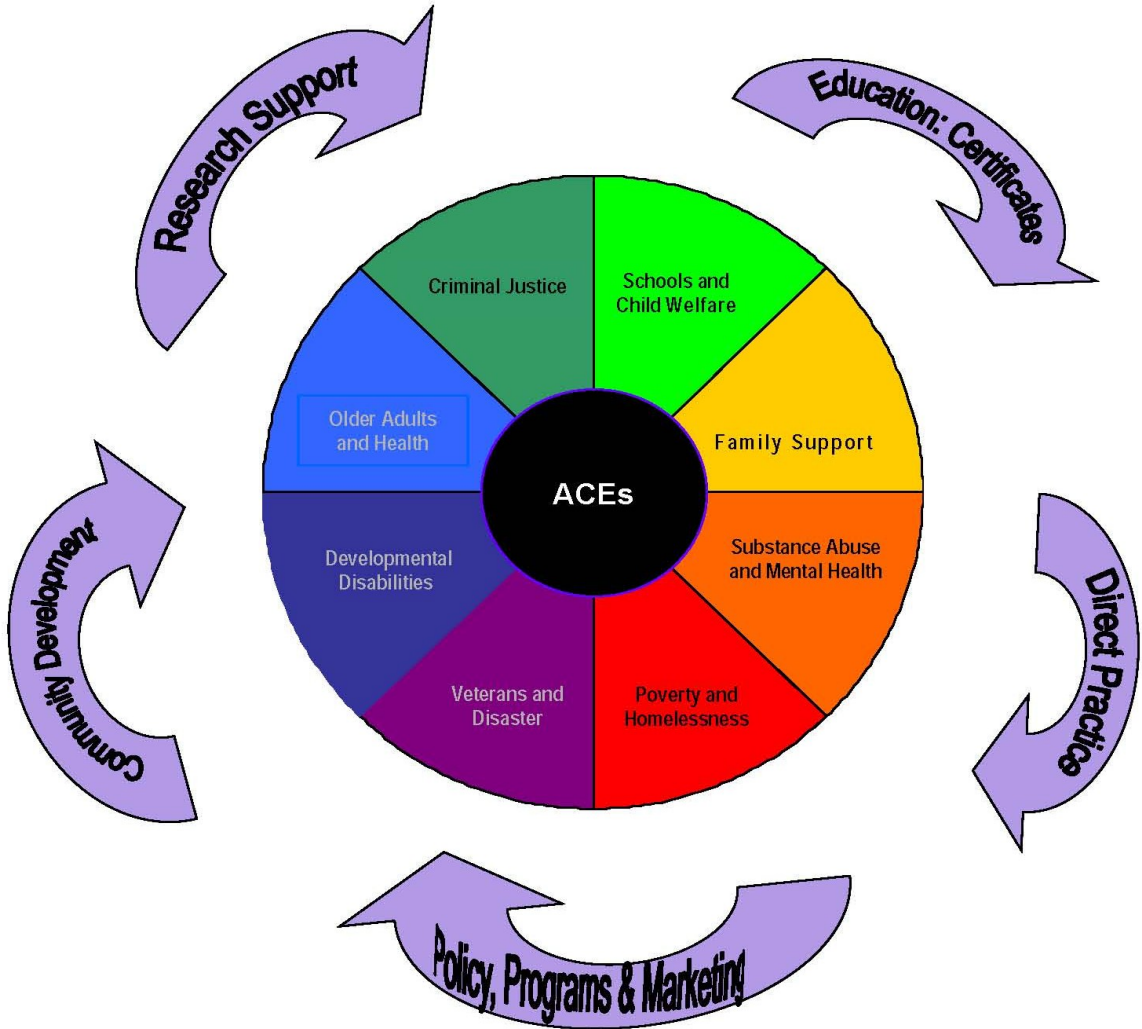
Victim blaming

“rugged individualism”

Family relational system/ACEs
Social violence
Health, Mental health, & Substance abuse services
Social service , school, & criminal justice systems
Public health policy responses

Development, behavior, health, culture, and systems

- Developmental theorists (Piaget, Kohlberg, Gilligan, Loevinger, Freud, and others)
- Impact of ACEs and health risk behaviors on development
- The role of culture and social systems
- Service interventions that prevent or effectively treat ACEs sooner might prevent homelessness (& other serious health and social outcomes) later in life



Key Milestones

- Felitti and Anda visits – 2007, 2008, 2009
- Policy Lunch – May 2009
- Council on Children and Families – June 2009, September 2009
- ACE Think Tank and Action Teams
 - Rob Anda, Vincent Felitti, Fred Bolton
- ACE Steering Committee
- NYS Omnibus Survey
- Multi-state ACE Learning Community
- ACE Response website – January 2011
(www.aceresponse.org)

Implications

- ACE Response: Fostering resilience & mobilizing protective factors
- Workforce development
- Practice, programs, policies that take trauma into account
- Cross-system linkages/ service integration
(TRANSFORMATION)