

Revision of the ACES to ACES-R4

The original ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale) was initially developed by the Centers for Disease Control in conjunction with Kaiser Permanente in the mid-1990s. It has since been used in a variety of research studies.

However, the initial ACES had several psychometric problems. First, most of the questions were double-barreled meaning that each question consisted of more than one construct. Additionally, the constructs were not equivalent. For example, the questions on physical abuse consisted of whether one was slapped vs. hit so hard that an injury resulted. The question on sexual abuse consisted of whether one was touched sexually vs. actually forced to have intercourse. The second problem was that the question responses consisted of only yes or no without any indication of duration of the abuse or problem.

The attached revision addresses both concerns. First, the questions with multiple parts were divided into separate questions. This resulted in clearer questions addressing a single issue. The second revision was to introduce a Likert scale to determine the frequency of occurrence to distinguish an isolated incident from repeated events or a pattern of problems.

Current research with only the first issue addressed found that the greater the number of discrete events experienced, the greater the probability that individuals entering an addiction treatment program would manifest indications of either PTSD or major depressive episodes. Thus, even with only the double-barreled issue addressed, the ACES showed a potential for identifying those individuals more likely to manifest mental health conditions in a treatment population.

This revision is presented as a possible means to gather more precise indications of experiences. Further research will be undertaken to determine whether this revision will provide more useful information than the original.

Identification Code: _____

Date: _____

Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire – ACES-R4

The following refer to while you were growing up, during your first 18 years of life.

Circle **0** for never; **1** for once; **2** for several times; **3** for many times.

- 0 1 2 3 1.a. Did a parent or other adult in the household often swear at you, insult you, put you down, or humiliate you?
- 0 1 2 3 1.b. Did a parent or other adult in the household act in a way that made you afraid that you might be physically hurt?
- 0 1 2 4 2.a. Did a parent or other adult in the household often push, grab, slap, or throw something at you?
- 0 1 2 4 2.b. Did a parent or other adult in the household ever hit you so hard that you had marks or were injured?
- 0 1 2 4 3.a. Did a person at least 5 years older than you ever touch or fondle you or have you touch their body in a sexual way?
- 0 1 2 4 3.b. Did a person at least 5 years older than you attempt or actually have oral, anal, or vaginal sex with you?
- 0 1 2 4 4.a. Did you often or very often feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were important or special?
- 0 1 2 4 4.b. Did you often or very often feel that your family didn't look out for each other, feel close to each other, or support each other?
- 0 1 2 4 5.a. Did you often or very often feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, and had no one to protect you?
- 0 1 2 4 5.b. Did you often or very often feel that your parents were too drunk or high to take care of you or take you to the doctor if you needed it?
- 0 1 2 4 6.a. Were your parents ever separated or divorced?
- 0 1 2 4 7.a. Was your mother or stepmother often pushed, grabbed, slapped, or had something thrown at her?
- 0 1 2 4 7.b. Was your mother or stepmother sometimes or often kicked, bitten, hit with a fist, or hit with something hard?
- 0 1 2 4 7.c. Was your mother or stepmother ever repeatedly hit over at least a few minutes or threatened with a gun or knife?
- 0 1 2 4 8.a. Did you live with anyone who was a problem drinker or alcoholic, or who used street drugs?
- 0 1 2 4 9.a. Was a household member depressed or mentally ill?
- 0 1 2 4 9.b. Did a household member attempt suicide?
- 0 1 2 4 10.a. Did a household member get arrested?
- 0 1 2 4 10.b. Did a household member go to prison?