

## TRAUMA



Trauma is an event or circumstance resulting in physical, emotional, or life-threatening harm. These events or circumstances can have lasting effects on mental, physical, emotional, social, and spiritual well-being.<sup>1</sup>

Studies show higher rates of substance use among individuals that have experienced trauma. This population may use substances for a sense of relief or distraction; this relief is temporary, and the use of substances to reduce symptoms is ultimately harmful.<sup>2</sup>

## ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood and are considered a prevention priority due to their association with chronic health problems, mental illness, and substance use.<sup>3</sup> ACEs include, but are not limited to:



- Abuse/neglect (physical, sexual, verbal, emotional)
- Witnessing violence in the home or community
- Losing a parent to divorce, separation, or death
- Family member with mental illness, substance use issues, or who is/was incarcerated
- Having a family member attempt or die by suicide
- Discrimination (e.g., racism, homophobia)



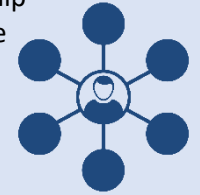
One in five (20%) Maine kids ages 0-17 years have two or more ACEs; this is slightly higher than the national average (19%).<sup>4</sup>

Compared to high school students with less than four ACEs, those with four or more are three times more likely to smoke cigarettes and two times more likely to drink alcohol.<sup>5</sup> According to a study of Maine youth, the most common ACE was childhood exposure to a household member's misuse of substances.<sup>6</sup>



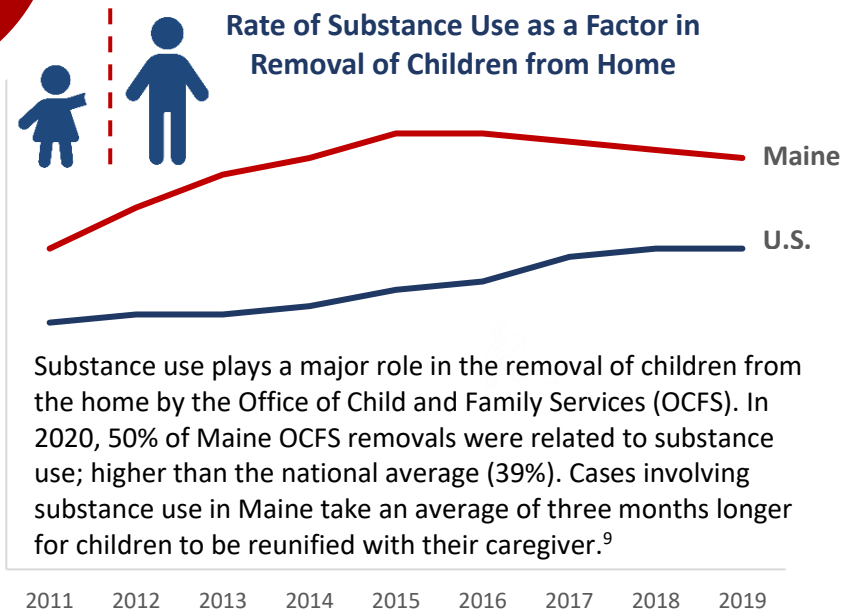
## PROTECTIVE FACTORS

A protective factor that can intervene in the relationship between trauma and substance use is mattering or the sense of being valued by others.<sup>7</sup> In 2019, about 60% of middle school youth and about 57% of high school youth in Maine reported feeling they mattered in their community; a decrease from past years.<sup>5</sup>



Family and school connectedness have protective effects related to mental health, violence, sexual behavior, and substance use. Nationally, youth who felt connected at school and/or home were up to 66% less likely to experience health risk behaviors related to sexual health, substance use, violence, and mental health in adulthood.<sup>8</sup>

**Fostering positive relationships strengthens resilience and promotes the health and well-being of youth in Maine.<sup>7</sup>**



Substance use plays a major role in the removal of children from the home by the Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS). In 2020, 50% of Maine OCFS removals were related to substance use; higher than the national average (39%). Cases involving substance use in Maine take an average of three months longer for children to be reunified with their caregiver.<sup>9</sup>



<sup>1</sup> SAMSHA  
<sup>2</sup> National Child Traumatic Stress Network  
<sup>3</sup> Centers for Disease Control  
<sup>4</sup> Maine Kids Count Data Basics Report  
<sup>5</sup> Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey

<sup>6</sup> Maine Rural Health Research Center  
<sup>7</sup> Maine Resilience Building Network  
<sup>8</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics  
<sup>9</sup> Maine Child Welfare Report