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## | Next Edition |

*What does school readiness  
really mean?*

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# Spout

Drops of Change for Children

Nebraska Children and Families Foundation | June 2015



## Protective Factors in action

Preventing adverse childhood experience with a proven framework



nebraskachildren  
AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION

Changemakers  
date announced

Mark your calendar for a keynote  
from Leigh Anne Tuohy on Sept. 8

Brad Bauer

Profile of a new Nebraska  
Children Board member

Pinwheels for  
Prevention Picnic

Recap of our 2nd annual  
celebration of positive parenting

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



nebraskachildren  
AND FAMILIES FOUNDATION

# Changemakers

Recognition luncheon featuring  
Keynote Speaker Leigh Anne Tuohy

Tuesday, September 8, 2015

11:30 am—1:00 pm

Embassy Suites, La Vista

Join Nebraska Children for a celebration of the heroes working to create positive change for kids in our state. The luncheon will feature Keynote Speaker Leigh Anne Tuohy, inspiration behind The New York Times bestseller and Sandra Bullock's Oscar®-winning performance in *The Blind Side*.

Leigh Anne will speak about the need to value those who fall through society's cracks. She'll also share her own experience adopting a homeless teenager, Michael Oher, who is now an NFL pro.



Leigh Anne Tuohy

Registration open now at [NCChangemakers.org](http://NCChangemakers.org)

- \$75/ticket
- \$750/table (tables of 10)

*Event planning committee:*

Joyce Davis	Sandy Parker
Connie and Todd Duncan	Jessie and Dean Rasmussen
Viv and John Ewing, Jr.	Carol Russell
Jodie and Bill Mackintosh	Gaye Lynn and Joe Schaffart
Marta Nieves	Teri Teutsch



# | Letter from the President |



Mary Jo Pankoke

Dear Friends,

We've just wrapped up Child Abuse Prevention Month in April and are in the midst of Foster Care Awareness Month in May. While these months mean a lot of activity for us at Nebraska Children, I think it says a lot that they're right next to each other.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), like child abuse or neglect, can lead to time spent in foster care. And time spent in foster care often leads to even more ACEs for this generation of children and the one to come. It's a cycle that's hard to stop once it gets started.

That's why we focus our efforts on preventing ACEs. We believe that creating communities that strengthen families from the beginning is a more effective way to protect children. Mitigating the risk factors that some families face by helping them build protective factors can lead to long-term self-sufficiency and family success.

There's something that happens every Foster Care Awareness Month that confirms our belief in working cradle to career. The foster youth in our Project Everlast program have experienced foster care, and usually several ACEs. And yet, they're standing up, proud and self-assured, to advocate for themselves and the children coming through the system behind them.

That kind of character, strength and perseverance is inspirational to me. It reminds us why we take a lifespan approach to prevention. All young people can make it when they're given the resources. There's always an opportunity to help them reach their full potential.

Thanks for supporting our prevention work. And thank you for supporting the work of the young people who are advocating for prevention on behalf of the next generation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jo".

Mary Jo Pankoke  
President and CEO



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# | News to Know |

## Early Childhood

### **Rooted in Relationships expands to Lincoln, Fremont and Grand Island**

Rooted in Relationships, a collaboration of Nebraska Children, has recently begun work in three new communities. Dodge, Lancaster and Hall Counties contain some of the state's largest population centers. Working with Rooted in Relationships, these counties will develop a plan to implement the teaching pyramid, an evidence-based practice to promote social-emotional competence in children ages 0-8.

## Teen/Young Adulthood



### **Camp Catch-Up call for volunteers**

This year, Nebraska Children will be holding three weekends of Camp Catch-Up. This unique summer camp reunites brothers and sisters who have been separated due to foster care placements. They come together for three days of fun and outdoor adventure. Camp Catch-Up is totally free of cost to the campers because it is volunteer staffed. Would you like to make a difference in the life of a child? Volunteer for Camp Catch-Up this year. Visit [CampCatchUp.org](http://CampCatchUp.org) for details.

## Cradle to Career

### **Bring Up Nebraska**

With funding from the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund, Nebraska Children developed a comprehensive campaign aimed at raising awareness of protective factors, and the role we all play in raising strong, stable children. The campaign included radio, web, social media, events and branded items to be used by Child Abuse Prevention Councils across the state.



### **York service array**

Stakeholders in York County have begun the process of building a community prevention system. They recently worked with Nebraska Children to conduct a service array assessment. The service array is meant to inventory the community's available assets for families, as well as identify any gaps. It's a critical first step to developing a community system that works for all families.

## Middle Childhood

### **National STEM Institute a success**

On April 14, Beyond School Bells, a Nebraska Children collaboration, held a National STEM Institute with support of the C.S. Mott Foundation, the Sherwood Foundation, the Noyce Foundation and others. This event drew out-of-school time systems builders and funders from across the nation to focus on infusing STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) into their state's afterschool and summer learning opportunities. Lt. Governor Mike Foley and Omaha Mayor Jean Stothert helped kick off the event.





# Brad Bauer

First joining the Nebraska Children board in 2015, Brad looks forward to helping the organization fulfill its mission of creating positive change for kids across the state.

Brad is Senior Vice President of Pinnacle Bank Nebraska, overseeing leadership and operations for the bank's Greater Nebraska and Kansas locations.

Brad earned his bachelor's degree at Kearney State College. Now living in Grand Island, Brad was an active leader in Ogallala, serving in the Ogallala Lions Club, on the Keith County Hospital Authority Board, and the Keith County Regional Economic Development Investment Board. Brad and his wife, Bonnie, have two children.

“It is so sad that so many of Nebraska’s children are facing such a disadvantage by being exposed to poverty, neglect and other issues that hamper their ability to become successful adults. The Nebraska Children and Families Foundation provides resources to communities to help these children overcome these challenges. It is my honor to be a new member of the Board and I hope to be able to contribute to the success of disadvantaged children through my work with the Nebraska Children and Families Foundation.”





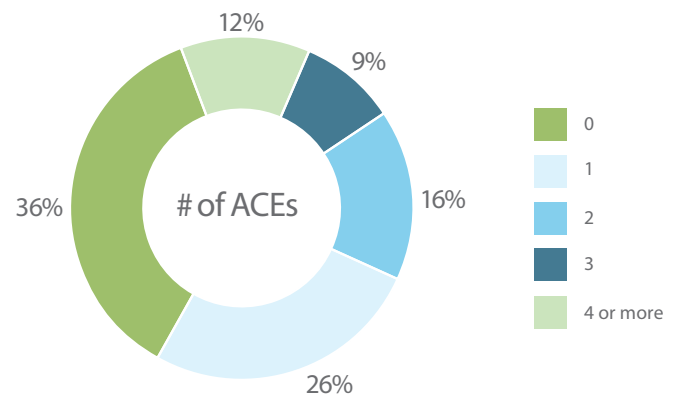
# Prevention through Protective Factors

The first question is always the same: What, exactly, are we trying to prevent? At Nebraska Children, our focus is on preventing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs).

An ACE is an instance of abuse, neglect, violence, poverty or any other trauma that occurs in the life of someone under the age of 18. The Kaiser ACE study looked at 17,000 children to examine the prevalence of ACE exposure nationally.

This study shows that 64% of children in the study suffered an Adverse Childhood Experience. Physical abuse and substance abuse were among the most common. 12% of the youth in the study had experienced 4 or more ACEs. Each exposure to an adverse childhood experience compounds the risk of future problems.

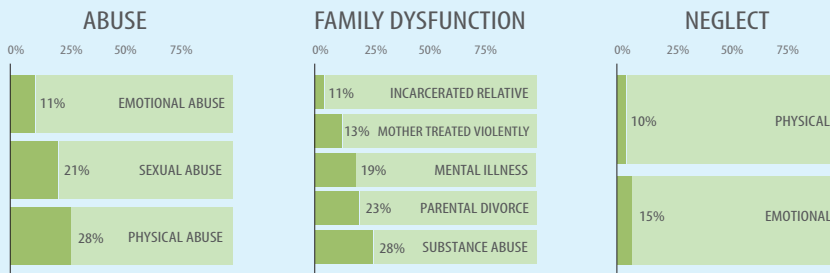
### How Common are ACEs?



Almost two-thirds of adults surveyed reported at least one Adverse Childhood Experience – and the majority of respondents who reported at least one ACE reported more than one.

### Types of ACEs

The ACE study looked at three categories of adverse experience: **childhood abuse**, which included emotional, physical and sexual abuse; **neglect**, including both physical and emotional neglect; and **family dysfunction**, which included growing up in a household where there was substance abuse, mental illness, violent treatment of a mother or stepmother, parental separation/divorce, or a member of the household in prison. Respondents were given an ACE score between 0 and 10 based on how many of these 10 types of adverse experience they reported being exposed to.



Children who are affected by Adverse Childhood Experiences face a higher likelihood of problems, both as children and when they become adults.

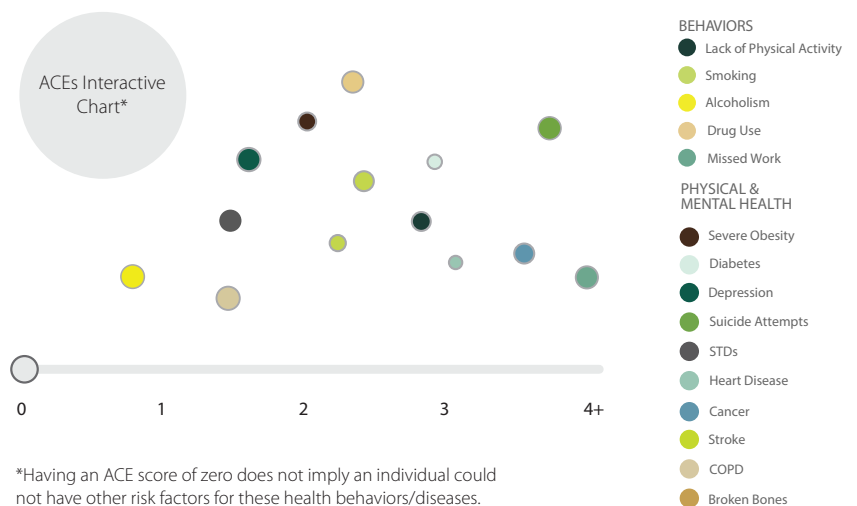
### The effects don't stop there.

The high-risk behaviors and mental illness caused by multiple ACEs can dramatically impact all of us. Higher crime rates. Greater dependence on public assistance. Declining workforce readiness. These larger societal patterns begin with individuals. Reducing the number of individuals with ACEs may be the key to reversing these trends.

### How do ACEs affect our lives?

#### ACEs can have lasting effects on behavior and health...

Simply put, our childhood experiences have a tremendous, lifelong impact on our health and the quality of our lives. The ACE Study showed dramatic links between adverse childhood experiences and risky behavior, psychological issues, serious illness and the leading causes of death.







# How does Nebraska stack up on ACEs?

Thanks to information from the 2012 ACE study by the Office of Epidemiology at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, we now have the answers.

### More Nebraska kids experienced ZERO ACEs in 2010-2011.

That's good news. Nationally, about 36% of children have exposure to zero ACEs, so on the whole our children have been better protected with nearly 47% being ACE-free.

However, a look at the chart tells you that in 2010 and 2011, about 22% of Nebraska's children experienced 3 or more ACEs. The national average is about 21%. So while fewer of our children are experiencing ACEs at all, the ones who do are as likely to have multiple exposures as children nationally.

What's that mean? It means that Nebraskans need to do a better job protecting the kids at greatest risk. Those at high risk are, of course, the hardest to reach.

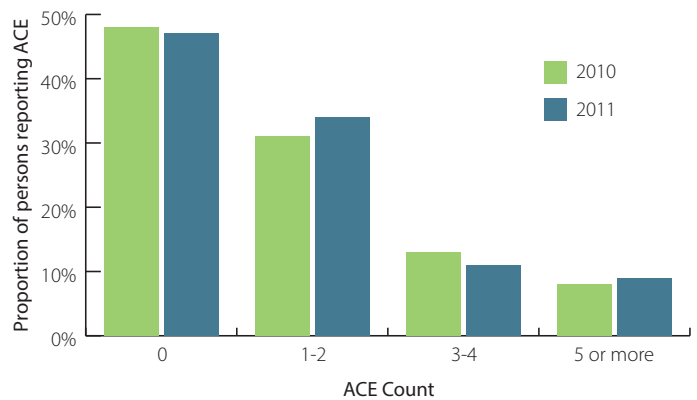
### Nebraska children are less likely to suffer from physical or sexual abuse.

While 15% of ACEs reported in Nebraska in 2011 were physical abuse, the national stat was 28%. About 8% of Nebraska ACE victims report sexual abuse, compared to 21% nationally. (Note: It's hard to know if the low number of reports are due to not reporting or fewer actual incidents, so we can't draw a conclusion other than that it's lower. More research would help us understand if the lower number is due to underreporting or stronger protection.)

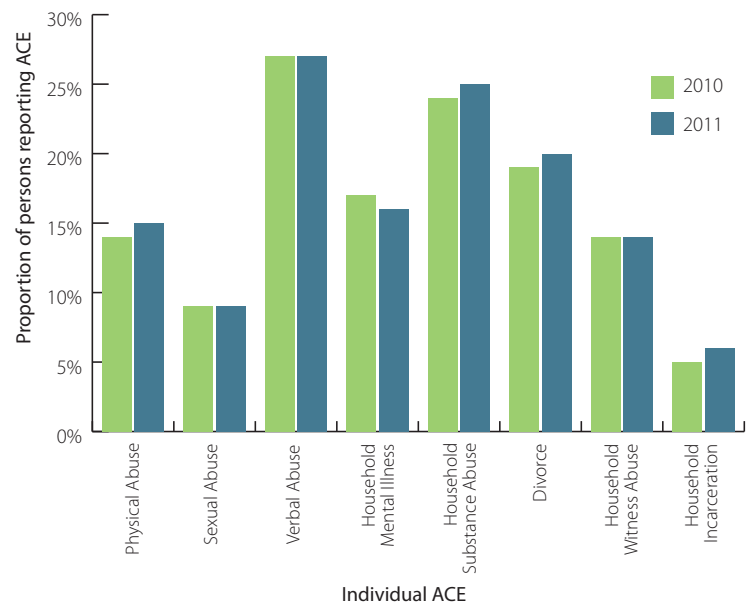
### Nebraska children are more likely to suffer verbal/emotional abuse.

Nationally, only 11% of ACE victims cite this offense. In Nebraska, it's 23%. These numbers make it clear that interaction education (like PIWI, PCIT, high-quality home visitation like the Sixpence programs) need to expand their reach, and teach parents how to have more positive interactions with their children. 🍃

Prevalence of ACE count in 2010-2011



Prevalence of Individual ACEs by year



# Protective Factors: Buffers that help families thrive

We've all heard of risk factors that make ACEs more likely to affect a child. Protective Factors are the positive counterpoint to risk factors. Protective Factors help families stay safe, healthy and strong, while helping keep risk factors from becoming ACEs.

According to research, when multiple risk factors are present in a family, there's a greater likelihood of negative outcomes, including child maltreatment and other ACEs. But when multiple Protective Factors enter the picture and are supported over time, we see a greater probability in positive outcomes for children, families and communities.

Protective Factors are critical for all children, youth, families and communities. They are the difference between families and communities that not only survive, but thrive. Each of us has a role to play to help strengthen protective factors in our community and the families around us.

## #1 Nurturing and Attachment

Research shows that babies who received affection and nurturing from their parents have the best chance of developing into children, teens and adults who are happy, healthy and have relational, self-regulation and problem-solving skills. Research also shows that a consistent relationship

with caring adults in the early years of life is associated with better grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions and increased ability to cope with stress later in life.

As children grow, nurturing by parents and other caregivers remains important for healthy physical and emotional development. Parents nurture older children by making time to listen, being involved and interested in the child's school and other activities, staying aware of the child or teen's interests and friends, and being willing to advocate for the child when necessary.

## #2 Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Parents who understand the usual course of child development are more likely to be able to provide their children with respectful communication, consistent rules and expectations, developmentally appropriate limits and opportunities that promote independence. But no parent can be an expert on all aspects of infant, child and teenage development or on the most effective ways to support a child at each stage. When parents are not aware of normal developmental milestones, interpret their child's behaviors in a negative way or do not know how to effectively manage a child's behavior,

they can become frustrated and may resort to harsh discipline.

As children grow, parents need to continue to foster their parenting competencies by learning about and responding to children's emerging needs. Information about child development and parenting may come from many sources, including extended families, cultural practices, media, formal parent education classes or a positive school environment that supports parents. Interacting with other children of similar ages also helps parents better understand their own child. Observing other caregivers who use positive techniques for managing behavior provides an opportunity for parents to learn healthy alternatives.

Parenting styles need to be adjusted for each child's unique temperament and circumstances. Parents of children with special needs may benefit from additional coaching and support to reduce frustration and help them become the parents their children need.

## #3 Parental Resilience

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience—the flexibility and inner strength to bounce back when things are not going well. Parents with resilience also know how to seek

help in times of trouble. Their ability to deal with life's ups and downs serves as a model of coping behavior for their children. This can help children learn critical self-regulation and problem-solving skills.

Multiple stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, physical and mental health problems, marital conflict, substance abuse and domestic or community violence—and financial stressors such as unemployment, economic insecurity and homelessness—can reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the day-to-day stresses of raising children. Conversely, community-level protective factors—such as a positive community environment and economic opportunities—enhance resilience.

All parents have inner strengths or resources that can help build their resilience. These may include faith, flexibility, humor, communication skills, problem-solving skills, mutually supportive caring relationships or the ability to identify and access resources and services when needed. All of these qualities strengthen their capacity to parent effectively, and they can be nurtured and developed through skill-building activities or through supportive interactions with others.

#### #4 Social Connections

Parents with a network of emotionally supportive friends, family and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves. Most parents need people they can call on once in a while when they need a sympathetic listener, advice or concrete support such as transportation or occasional child care. In other words, a positive community environment—and the parent's ability to participate effectively in his or her community—is an important protective factor. On the

other hand, research has shown that parents who are isolated and have few social connections are at higher risk for child abuse and neglect.

Social connections support children in multiple ways. A parent's positive relationships give children access to other caring adults, a relationship-level protective factor that may include extended family members, mentors or other members of the community. Parents' social interactions also model important relational skills for children and increase the likelihood that children will benefit from involvement in positive activities (individual-level factors). As children grow older, positive friendships and support from peers provide another important source of social connection.

Being new to a community, recently divorced or a first-time parent makes a support network even more important. It may require extra effort for these families to build the new relationships they need. Some parents may need to develop self-confidence and social skills to expand their social networks. In the meantime, social connections can come from other caring adults such as service providers, teachers or advocates. Helping parents identify resources and/or providing opportunities for them to make connections within their neighborhoods may encourage isolated parents to reach out. Often, opportunities exist within faith-based organizations, schools, hospitals, community centers and other places where support/social groups meet.

#### #5 Concrete Supports

Families whose basic needs (food, clothing, housing and transportation) are met have more time and energy to devote to their children's safety and well-being. When parents do not have steady financial resources, lack a stable living situation, lack health insurance or

face a crisis (such as a natural disaster or the incarceration of a parent), their ability to support their children's healthy development may be at risk. Families whose economic means are limited may need assistance connecting to social service supports such as housing, alcohol/drug treatment, domestic violence counseling or public benefits.

Partnering with parents to identify and access resources may help prevent the stress that sometimes precipitates child maltreatment. Offering concrete supports also may help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

#### #6 Social and Emotional Competence of Children

Children's emerging ability to form bonds and interact positively with others, self-regulate their emotions and behavior, communicate their feelings, and solve problems effectively has a positive impact on their relationships with their family, other adults and peers. Parents and caregivers grow more responsive to children's needs—and less likely to feel stressed or frustrated—as children learn to tell parents what they need and how parental actions make them feel, rather than “acting out” difficult feelings.

On the other hand, children's challenging behaviors or delays in social-emotional development create extra stress for families. Parenting is more challenging when children do not or cannot respond positively to their parents' nurturing and affection. These children may be at greater risk for abuse. Identifying and working with children early to keep their development on track helps keep them safe and helps their parents facilitate their healthy development. 🍵



2nd Annual

# Pinwheels for Prevention Picnic



To celebrate National Child Abuse Awareness Month, Nebraska Children hosted a family-friendly, 100% free event in Lincoln's Railyard. The Pinwheels for Prevention Picnic was an opportunity for more than 200 families to come together and enjoy entertainment, food, music and free giveaways.

The day was kicked off by Courtney Phillips, Nebraska's new CEO of the Department of Health and Human Services, as well as Brandon Verzal, chair of the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board.

Children loved the massive bounce house, cotton candy, balloon-bending clowns and face painting. Even Homer from the Lincoln Saltdogs made an appearance.

Jimmy John's and Buffalo Wings and Rings donated food to keep the hungry crowd well-nourished and happy. Family-friendly band The String Beans took the stage and had everyone dancing. Nebraska Children was on-hand to hand out free gifts and information to parents and kids.

This year's event was funded by the Nebraska Child Abuse Prevention Fund Board in partnership with Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services and Nebraska Children.

