



CHILDREN'S TRUST OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Policy Agenda

Children are our state's most important resource. South Carolina lawmakers have an opportunity to help children and their families thrive. The investments made now will reap benefits for generations to come.

Prioritize Primary Prevention

Preventing adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) helps children develop socially and emotionally.

Expand access to primary prevention programs and services to help families build protective factors, prevent ACEs and stay out of the pipeline for social services.

COVID-19 Response

The pandemic showed how vulnerable families are.

The need, especially access to high-speed internet, have been highlighted because of the pandemic. A plan to have broadband access to the most rural parts of South Carolina is vital to ensure that all children can continue their educations virtually. Additionally, ensuring access to safe and affordable child care allows caregivers to continue to work and provide for their families.

Implement Family-Friendly Work Policies

Policies that help parents balance the responsibilities between work and home will build a stronger workforce.

Studies show that family-friendly work policies, like paid family leave, improve worker retention and reduce turnover, especially for new mothers who are more likely to return to the same job. Workers are more productive when they have balance between competing priorities at home and at work. Too many parents are forced to choose between caring for a new child or keeping a job with health insurance.

Strengthen Economic Supports to Families

Children and their families must have basic needs met in order to provide a stable home.

When families struggle to meet basic needs, parental stress rises, which increases the likelihood of child maltreatment. Concrete supports, such as food, clothing, housing and transportation, to families in time of need are critical to support the prevention of child abuse and neglect.



Protective Factors

Protective factors work to build strong families, provide for healthy child development and reduce adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This widely accepted framework informs our work to prevent abuse and neglect, including this policy agenda.

Social and Emotional Competence

A child's early experience of being nurtured and developing a bond with a caring adult affects all aspects of behavior and development. A relationship with a consistent, caring adult in the early years is associated later in life with better academic grades, healthier behaviors, more positive peer interactions, and an increased ability to cope with stress.

Social Connections

Parents with a social network of emotionally supportive friends, family, and neighbors often find that it is easier to care for their children and themselves than those who do not have such a network. Research has shown that parents who are isolated and have few social connections are at higher risk for maltreating their children.

Concrete Supports

Families who can meet their own basic needs for food, clothing, housing, and transportation – and who know how to access essential services, such as child care, health care, and mental health services to address family-specific needs – are better able to ensure the safety and well-being of their children. Providing concrete supports may also help prevent the unintended neglect that sometimes occurs when parents are unable to provide for their children.

Resilience

Parents who can cope with the stresses of everyday life, as well as an occasional crisis, have resilience; they have the flexibility and inner strength necessary to bounce back when things are not going well. Multiple life stressors, such as a family history of abuse or neglect, health problems, marital conflict, or domestic or community violence - and financial stressors such as unemployment, poverty, and homelessness - may reduce a parent's capacity to cope effectively with the typical day-to-day stresses of raising children.

Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development

Children thrive when parents provide not only affection but also respectful communication and listening, consistent rules and expectations, and safe opportunities that promote independence. Successful parenting fosters psychological adjustment, helps children succeed in school, encourages curiosity about the world, and motivates children to achieve.

What are Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)?

ACEs are traumatic events that occur in a child's life prior to the age of 18. This adversity can harm a child's brain and its development, which can result in long-term negative health and social outcomes.

ACEs include emotional, physical and sexual abuse; domestic violence; substance use and mental illness of someone in the household; being separated from parents, including incarceration and divorce; food insecurity; and homelessness. To learn about ACEs in your community, visit [scChildren.org/resources/research-data](https://scchildren.org/resources/research-data).

About Children's Trust of South Carolina

Children's Trust of South Carolina is the statewide organization focused on the prevention of child abuse and neglect. We provide funding, resources and training to help local program partners build strong families and positive childhoods. Children's Trust leads the state's coordinated efforts for the Strengthening Families Program; Triple P (Positive Parenting Program); S.C. Adverse Childhood Experiences Initiative; Maternal, Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting; Child Abuse Prevention Month; and KIDS COUNT.

