

Alexandra Odenthal

M.P.H. Candidate, Global Health Track

alexandra.odenthal@vanderbilt.edu

Practicum Site: The Family Center

Practicum Site Supervisor: Susan Galeas, M.P.H., M.S.W.

Adverse Childhood Experiences in Nashville, Tennessee

Keywords: Adverse Childhood Experience; Resilience; Trauma-informed care

Introduction: The summer practicum experience was held at The Family Center in Nashville, Tennessee, an organization committed to breaking the cycle of multigenerational childhood trauma and combating the effects of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). The primary objectives of the practicum included analyzing qualitative and quantitative data, and these findings were then communicated to relevant stakeholders to help evaluate and strengthen the organization's current programs.

Methods: Thorough literature review and analysis of organizational data were performed to increase knowledge about the long-term health effects of ACEs and help guide the development and implementation of trauma-informed and resilience-building practices. These results were compiled into various infographic-type materials and communicated to relevant stakeholders at The Family Center to underscore the importance of ACE-related science and research.

Results: In recent years, research has shown that many children in Tennessee are exposed to multiple ACEs, leading to the adoption of unhealthy habits and adverse health outcomes in both the short-term and long term. Additionally, exposure to ACEs' has been associated with high levels of healthcare spending. Despite this, children with access to community resilience assets like opportunities to utilize their talents and access to trusted adults have been shown to dramatically reduce the prevalence of poor childhood health in those with exposure to a high number of ACEs.

Conclusions: Recognizing and addressing the role that ACEs and childhood trauma play in the lives of Tennessee's children and families is critical. Using measurable outcomes and evidence-based practices, organizations like The Family Center can better educate those involved in public policy and help advocate for further incorporation of ACE science and trauma-informed practices into legislation and public programs.

