Homelessness and Other Traumas Experienced During Childhood

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Agenda

" Engaging Homeless Youth Project

" The ACES

" Working with youth through trauma-informed lens

" Resources

" Wrap-up with Q&A

Objectives

" Sharing resources

" Understanding the role of trauma in our clients lives

" And learning practices that are trauma-informed

Who's in the audience?

Foundational Elements

" Definitions

" The Core of Engagement: Relationship

" Physical Environment

" Service Design

" Measuring Engagement

Defining Youth and other definitions

" No standard definition of *homeless youth*

" For the project we used ages 12-24.

" Pathways (ex. Familial rejection, intergenerational homelessness, aging out of foster care, MH/BH issues, etc.)

" Sub-groups/sub-populations (ex. LGBTQ, accompanied or unaccompanied, youth who are pregnant or parenting, youth involved in the juvenile justice or foster care systems, victims of sexual trafficking and exploitation.)

" Newly vs chronically homeless

" Youth's perception of homelessness

" Safety

" "Meeting clients where they are"

" Youth-centric physical environment

" Youth involvement

Considerations in Service Delivery

" Medical

" Sexual Health

" Mental and Behavioral Health

" Social and support services

" Healing Arts and other Creative Interests

" Interdisciplinary Care and Community Partnership

Image by Edward Gorey from *Three Classic Children's Stories*

Measuring Engagement

" Individual Level

" Agency Level

Image by Gus Gordon from Herman and Rosie

- Target population

- Community partnerships

- Staff training on cultural humility

- Utilization of services & data systems

- Outcomes of services & satisfaction

- Core-level engagement

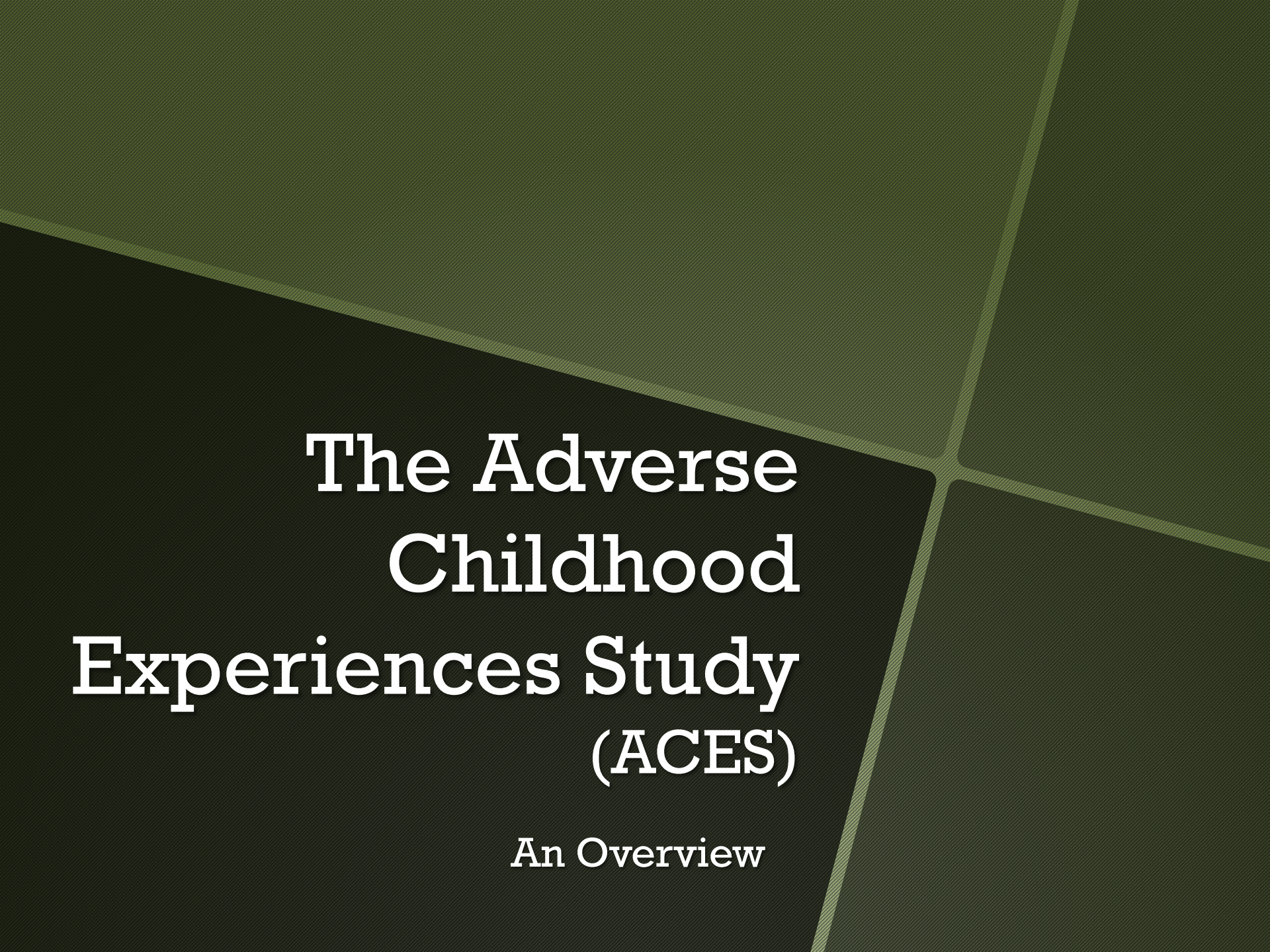# Challenges of Engagement

" Rigid agency policies

" Legal issues

" Substance Use

" Perception & knowledge of available services

" Insufficient agency resources

" Rural Settings

" Outcomes and Reimbursement

Photography by: Molly Malone Cook

The Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES)

An Overview

Adverse Childhood Experiences Study

" The study examined the relationship between trauma experienced between ages 0-18 and health outcomes in adulthood.

" Relationship between the number of trauma & ⬆ number of risk factors for several leading causes of death in adulthood.

Vincent J. Felitti, et al. American Journal of Preventive Medicine (1998) Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study. 14(4), pg 245-258.

Trauma in ACES

" Abuse
   ◆ Psychological (2)
   ◆ Physical (2)
   ◆ Sexual (4)

" Household Dysfunction
   ◆ Substance Abuse (2)
   ◆ Mental illness (2)
   ◆ Violence against parent (4)
   ◆ Criminal behavior (1)

Health Outcomes in Adulthood

" Risk factors (10)

◆ Smoking

◆ Severe obesity

◆ Suicide attempts

◆ Number of sexual partners

" Diseases (7)

◆ Cancer

◆ Hepatitis

◆ Diabetes

prevention of adverse experiences in childhood
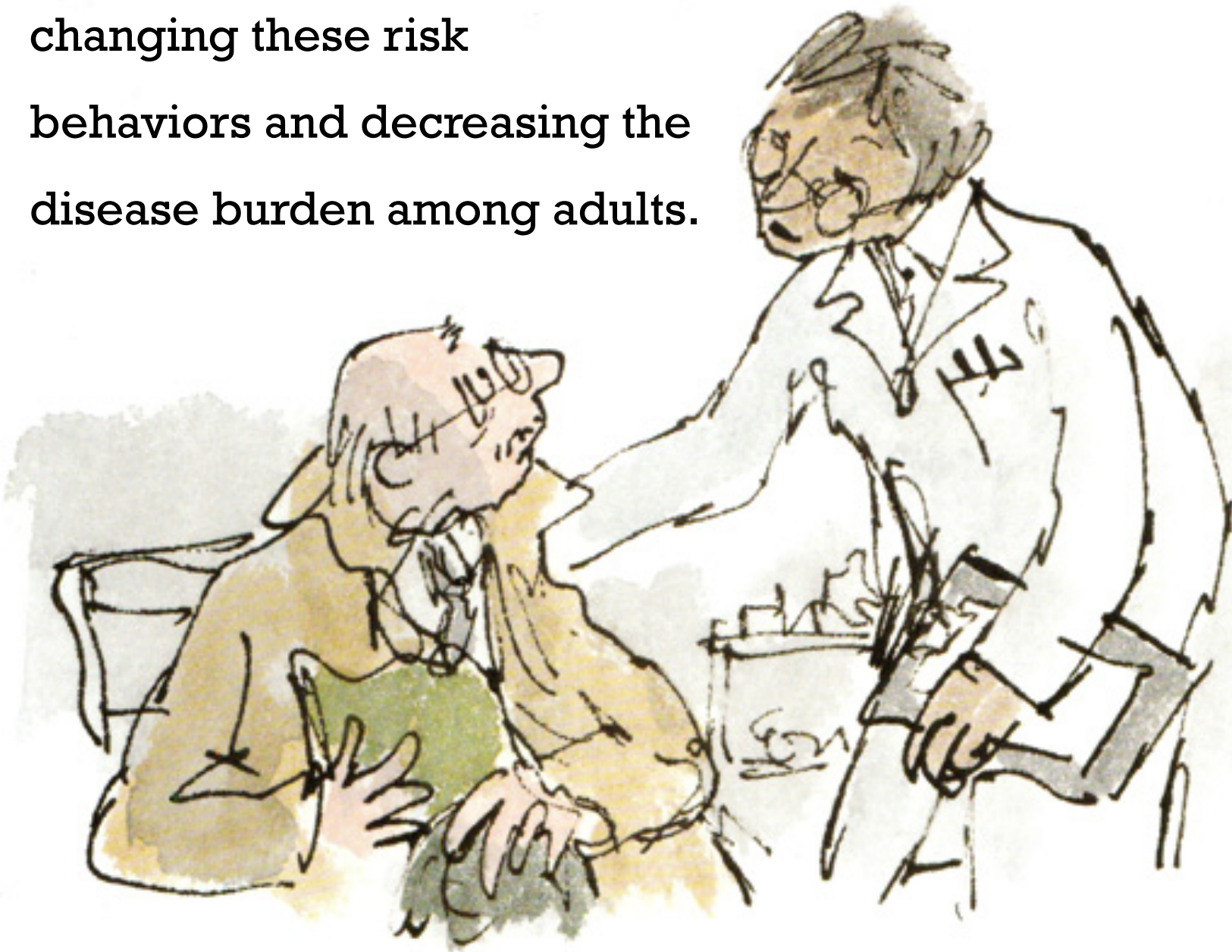
Illustrations by Quentin Black from Sad Book

prevention of the adoption of unhealthy coping strategies

- Smoking

- Alcohol

- Drug Use

- Overeating

- Sexual

  behaviors

Illustrations by Quentin Black from Sad Book

changing these risk behaviors and decreasing the disease burden among adults.

Using the ACES to learn about other populations and experiences…

ACE: Expanding the Concept of Adversity

" To more accurately represent the level of adversity experienced across various socio-demographic groups

" Witnessed violence

" Felt discrimination

" Unsafe neighborhood

" Experienced bullying

" Lived in foster care

ACES and Engagement

- Homeless youth ACE scores
  - Physician Trust Scale scores
  - Adult Attachment Scale scores

- Common themes identified were
  - reported experiences of adult perpetrated trauma
  - suspicion of health care providers
  - avoidance of health professionals

The response….

" **Trauma-informed Care….**

" **Education and practice**

  " Increasing awareness

  " Understanding behavioral coping strategies

  " Psychosocial assessments

  " Anticipatory guidance

  " Increase in physician training to best address trauma and its long-term health impact

- Subjective

- An experience that creates a sense of fear, helplessness, or horror, and overwhelms a person's resources for coping

- Wide range of events

What is trauma?

- Sudden loss of home & belongings

- Frequent change of home base

Traumatic Experiences Among Youth in Shelter

- Devastating

- Long-lasting

- Interferes with a person's sense of self & safety

- Leads to feelings of helplessness, terror, and disempowerment

- May lead to PTSD and Complex Trauma

Hopper, E.K., Bassuk, E.L., & Olivet, J. (2010). Shelter from the storm: Trauma-informed care in homelessness services settings. *The Open Health Services and Policy Journal*, 3, 80-100.

Impact of Traumatic Stress

- Spectrum of responses

- May change over time

- Pervasive sense of anxiety

- Extreme & uncontrollable emotional responses to triggers (fear, dread, anger)

- Helplessness, hopelessness, sadness

- Flashbacks, nightmares

Emotional Impact of Trauma

- Avoidance

- Aggressive or inappropriate behavior

- Heightened startle response

- Overreaction to seemingly small offenses

- Attention seeking

- Disrupted interpersonal relationships

- Mistrust

Behavioral Impact of Trauma

Trauma-Informed Care Framework

- Lens to view behavior & reactions

- Inform appropriate responses and behavioral support

- "What's wrong with you?" → "What has happened to you?"

- Avoid assumptions

- Youth may not recognize links between trauma & behavior

❏ **C**hoice and Voice

❏ **C**onsequences

❏ **C**onsistency

❏ **C**alm

❏ **Validate** and set clear expectations

❏ Space to deescalate

❏ Consistent, structured   routines

❏ Active engagement

Trauma Informed Care with Youth

- Health care professionals

- Students

- Volunteers

TIC Training

Potential Trauma-Related Pitfalls

- **Assuming everyone** will respond to trauma in same way

- **Pathologizing** early distress or reactions

- **Conveying** assumption that trauma exposure inevitably results in long-term psychological damage

- **Creating** situations in which trauma-exposed youth have little choice or control

- **Forcing** youth or parents to tell their story (but remember to listen carefully when they do)

- **Ignoring** your own stress from trauma-oriented work

Scenarios

Images by Maurice Sendak from Open House for Butterflies

Resources

- EHY Publication

- In Focus: BH and Youth

- Anticipatory Guidance

- Local Resources

- E-newsletters & peer network

- TIC Training TOMORROW!

Next Steps

" TIC is an ongoing process

" Continuing learning

" Incorporate into supervision

" Join a peer-support network

Wrap-up

" Turn to your neighbor
(5 minutes)

" Q&A

" REMINDER: Paper Evaluations