

## **ACEs: What Mentors need to Know**

Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs include abuse, neglect and household dysfunction. The effects of ACEs were first researched in a groundbreaking public health study that linked childhood trauma to high-risk behavior. In other words, the more childhood trauma, the greater the likelihood of (among other things) social problems, mental/physical health issues, depression, and becoming a victim of violence.

The study found that most people report having at least one ACEs in their background. Even in Issaquah, ACEs are more common than you might think.

Fortunately, mentors can play a positive role in countering the detrimental effects of ACEs. Relationships are the key! Having at least one caring safe relationship can make a huge difference in helping your mentee build resilience. Additionally, research finds that increased resilience increases the likelihood that mentees will flourish and become productive adults. Children who have a “mentor-like” relationship in their lives are more likely to complete tasks, remain calm in the face of challenges, show interest in learning new things, volunteer in the community, and be engaged in school.

Knowing about ACEs shouldn't cause mentors to worry that they don't have the tools or the experience to be an effective mentor. In fact, regardless of what you may or may not know about your mentee's background, your responsibility will remain the same – to work towards developing and cultivating a close, positive, supportive relationship with your mentee.

*\* Site coordinators have expertise and training in ACEs and other subjects.*