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# Relationships between adverse childhood experiences and protective factors among parents at-risk for child maltreatment

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### Highlights

- Adverse childhood experiences can negatively impact protective factors in parents.
- High ACE scores in parents are related to less resiliency and social connections.
- Lacking health insurance and being single reduced parenting protective factors.

### Abstract

Childhood adversity has been linked to negative outcomes related to health, behavior, and interpersonal relationships among adults. Research has explored how a parental history of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) can impact the health and wellbeing of their own children. A parental history of ACEs can heighten the risk of perpetuating intergenerational patterns of

trauma transmission. However, few studies have examined connections between a parental history of ACEs and protective factors that could mitigate such risk. This study used survey results to examine relationships between parental ACEs and protective factors among a sample of 581 parents with young children ( $\leq 5$  years) who were enrolled in child maltreatment prevention programs. Results indicated that a parental history of ACEs can attenuate overall levels of protective factors, specifically resilience and social connections. Similar relationships were also found between demographic variables related to socioeconomic status, living arrangement, and some protective factors. Our preliminary findings support the need to screen at-risk parents for a history of ACEs. Directions for future research include study replication and the development of trauma-informed interventions meant to enhance these protective factors among at-risk parents with a history of ACEs.

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## Keywords

Childhood trauma; Adverse childhood experiences; Parenting; Protective factors; Child maltreatment; Intergenerational transmission of trauma

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