Parental Substance Use and Feeling Angry Towards Their Children

A parent’s substance use can impact a child in many different ways and the April DDatagram examines one of these ways. Data from National Survey of Children’s Health finds that parents who report having a person in their household who has a problem with alcohol or drugs are much more likely to report feeling angry towards their children. In fact, parents in households with substance use issues are nearly twice as likely to reply they sometimes feel angry at their children, and three times as likely to report they always feel angry at their children as their counterparts without substance use issues. Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs, are traumatic events or conditions that occur during childhood and can have lifelong detrimental impacts, such as increased health problems and lower life expectancy. The more ACEs an individual experiences, the greater the likelihood he or she will experience poorer health status. Living in a household with a person who abuses substances is one ACE as is experiencing emotional abuse or neglect during childhood. Because of the relationship between parent substance use and feelings of anger towards their children, programs and policies should address both early interventions for children that experience ACEs as well as programs to support prevention, treatment, and stress management for parents.

1 Hussaini, K., Offutt-Powell, T., Christensen, M., & Woodall, L. The impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE) on health-related quality of life, mental health, and hospitalizations in Delaware.

Source: 2016 National Survey of Children’s Health. Funding for this project has been provided by the Department of Health and Human Services, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation of the Department of Health and Human Services. DDATAgrams may be copied without permission. Please cite SEOW as source. Additional DDATAgrams are available at: https://www.cdhs.udel.edu/seow/publications