



Prevention Makes Cents: A Business Case for Increased Focus on Substance Misuse Prevention Efforts

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Business Case for Prevention

- Inspired by a conversation with the DEA at the 2023 National Prevention Network Conference
- SAMHSA hasn't done [a cost-benefit analysis of Prevention](#) since 2008
- The Chicago Strategic Action Council agreed that an updated business case for prevention was needed to help others outside the field understand the benefits of investing in prevention and the costs when we don't



PREVENTION MAKES CENTS

A Business Case for Increased Focus on
Substance Misuse Prevention Efforts



Connecting the Dots: ACEs and Substance Use

3 Realms of ACEs

Adverse childhood and community experiences (ACEs) can occur in the household, the community, or in the environment and cause toxic stress. Left unaddressed, toxic stress from ACEs harms children and families, organizations, systems and communities, and reduces the ability of individuals and entities to respond to stressful events with resiliency. Research has shown that there are many ways to reduce and heal from toxic stress and build healthy, caring communities.



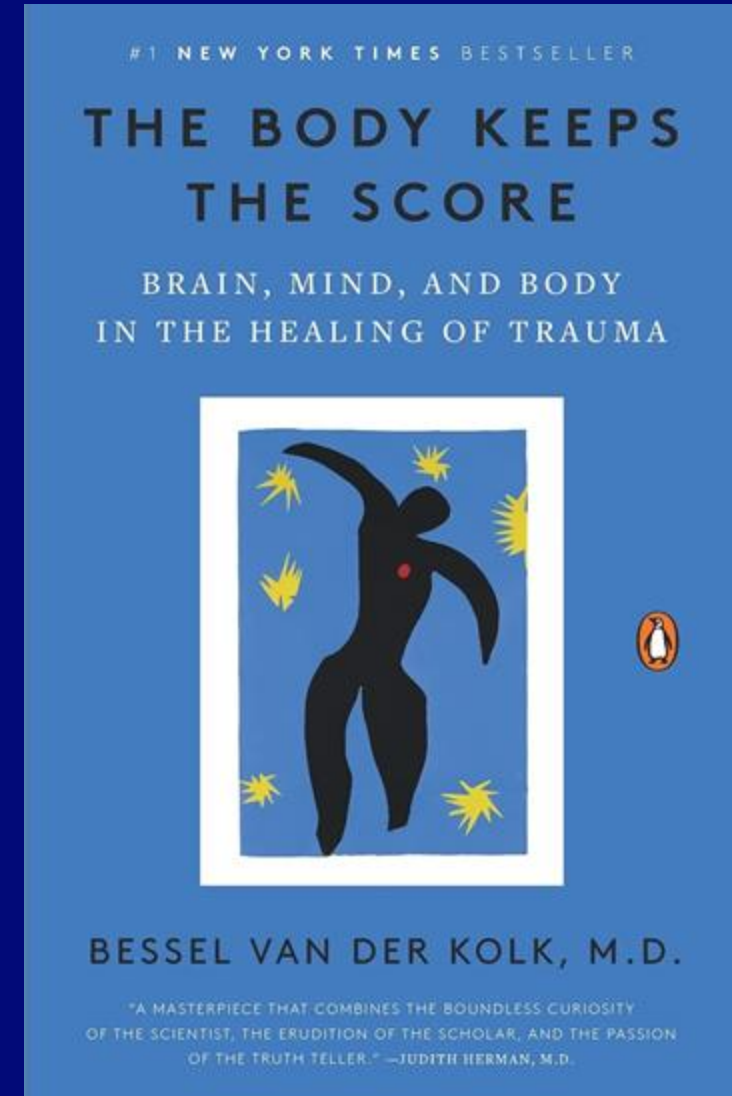
Mental and Physical Health

Childhood trauma “dramatically increases the risk for seven out of 10 of the leading causes of death in the United States.”

“Folks who are exposed in very high doses have triple the lifetime risk of heart disease and lung cancer and a 20-year difference in life expectancy.”

The higher the ACE score, the more likely adults are to experience a host of negative consequences, including the following:

- 1220% more likely to attempt suicide
- 1003% more likely to inject substances
- 460% more likely to have recent depression
- 400% more likely to have alcohol use disorder





What is Substance Use Prevention?

What is Prevention?

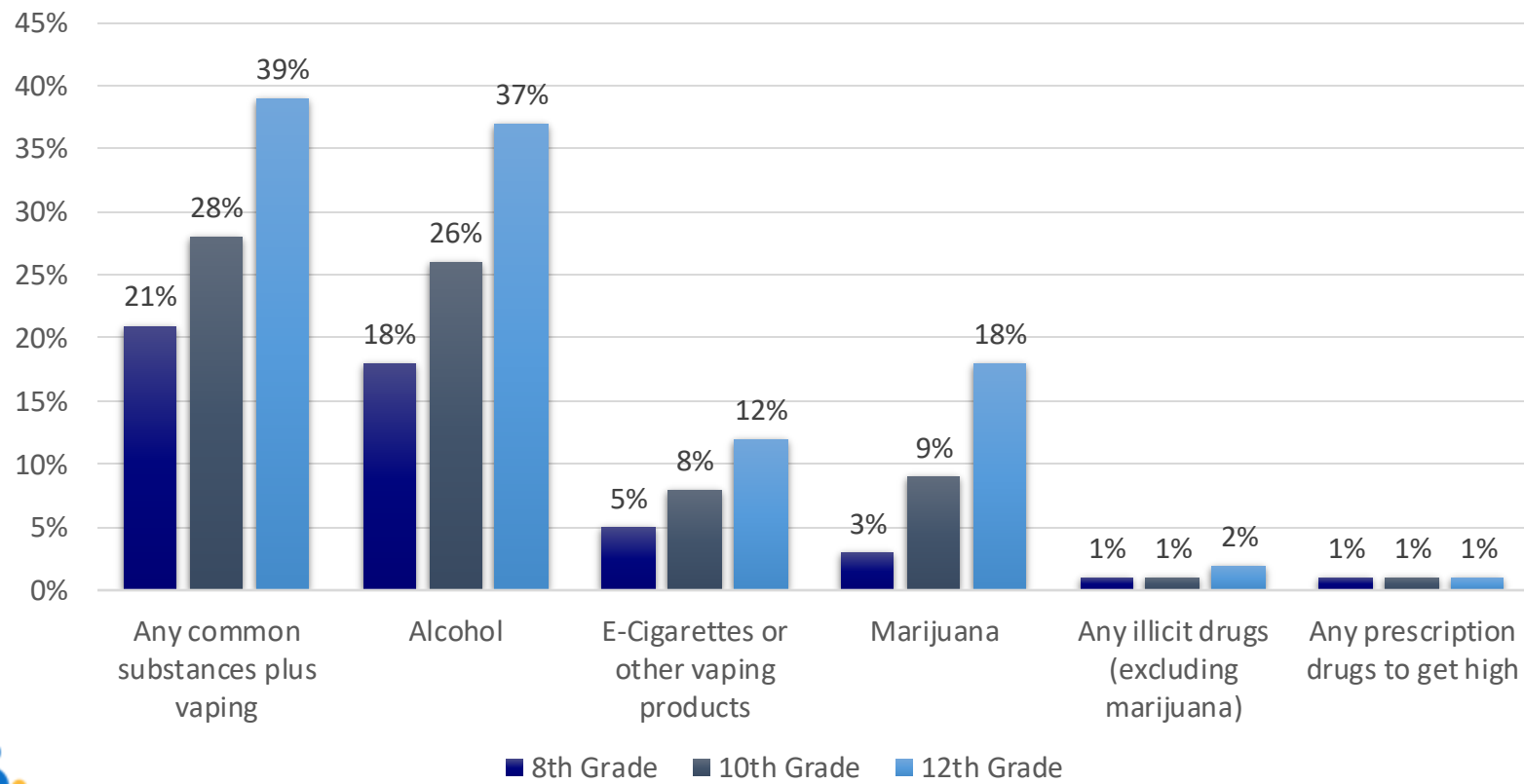


National Prevention Network Working Definition as of 6/11/25:

Substance use prevention aims to delay the initial use of alcohol and other drugs and decrease substance misuse among people of all ages to promote healthy and thriving communities.

Prevalence of Substance Use Among Youth in Illinois

Youth Substance Use Rates (% of Respondents Surveyed)



Data from the 2024 Illinois Youth Survey, conducted with 8th, 10th, and 12th graders at participating schools



Economic Impact of Substance Misuse and ACEs

Prevalence of ACEs

- ~61% of adults have at least one ACE
- ~16% have 4+
- Over 83% of treated adolescents report trauma exposure



Cost of ACEs

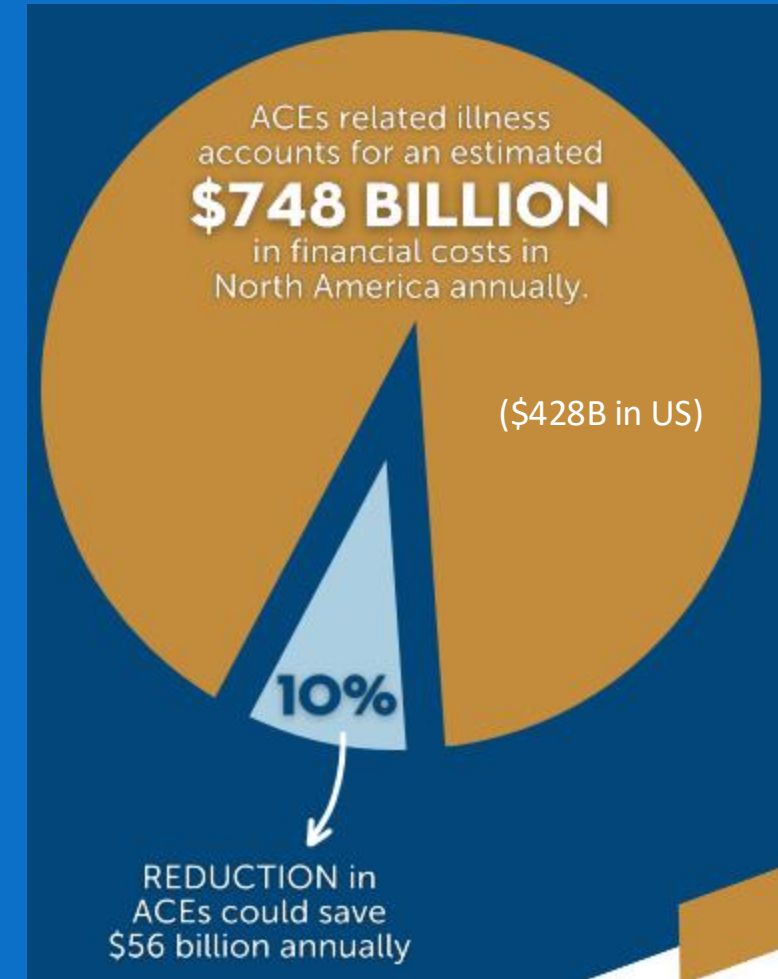


Image Source: [Youth Prevention Resource Center](#)



Costs Associated with Substance Use and ACEs

- >\$13B for US hospitals to treat substance use disorders in emergency and inpatient settings
- >\$7.6B in costs for alcohol-related disorders
- Individuals who experience ACEs are more likely to struggle with academic achievement, leading to lower lifetime earnings and decreased economic mobility
- Lost productivity:
 - Substance misuse influences people to miss work due to hangovers, withdrawal symptoms, etc.
 - Additional costs associated with reduced performance and turnover
 - 38-50% of all workers' compensation claims are related to the use of drugs and alcohol in the workplace
- Criminal justice system
 - Over 90% of juvenile detainees reported having at least one traumatic incident
 - Up to 95% of incarcerated men and women have experienced trauma at least one time, but usually more than once

Final Thoughts

- “Marijuana isn’t the gateway drug. **Trauma** is the gateway drug.” – Chris Schaffner, JOLT Harm Reduction
- If we want to reduce the societal and economic impacts of substance misuse, we must invest in the following:
 - Preventing ACEs
 - Strategies proven effective at preventing, delaying, and reducing substance use
 - Efforts that help people heal and break cycles of intergenerational trauma



What questions do you have?

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