

The Price of ACEs: Hurting lives and our economy



The research on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and the early brain makes a compelling case for investing in young children's well-being. But child maltreatment doesn't just hurt kids. It also results in quantifiable economic costs for Arizona.

The Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium advocates for investments in children because we want every child in Arizona to

grow up healthy, ready to contribute to their families and communities. But we know that when kids have the supports they need from the very beginning, our economy benefits too.

In Arizona alone, it is estimated that over 69,000 kids have *five or more* ACEs—that's enough children to fill the University of Phoenix Stadium. As tragic as this is for the children, there is an associated financial cost that society bears. The Perryman Group, an economic and financial analysis firm, estimates that each incidence of first-time child maltreatment costs the US economy about \$1.8 million in total expenditures.* To put that into perspective, the cost associated with the *first time one child* is maltreated is enough to pay the salaries of approximately 43 Arizona kindergarten teachers for a year. While there is no quick fix to the root causes of maltreatment, the economic losses testify to the need for greater investment in Arizona's children.

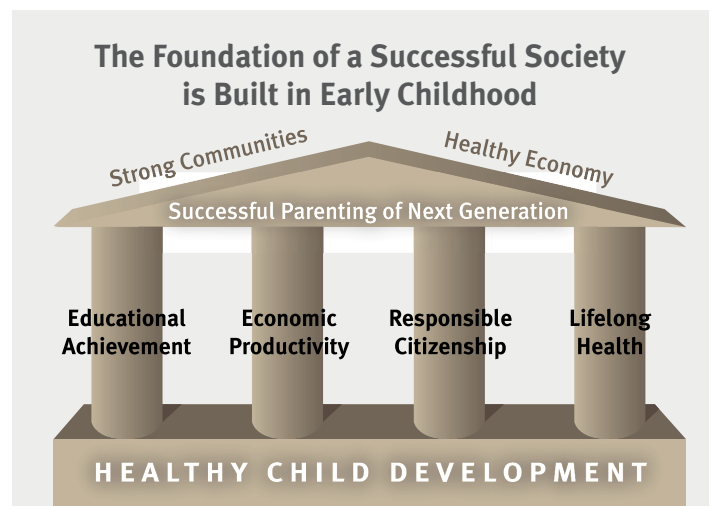
Fortunately, what we give to kids comes back many times over in the form of safer cities, a stronger workforce, and a more

vibrant Arizona. Studies show that education and other programs for at-risk kids provide a high return on investment by promoting greater personal achievement and productivity, more social mobility, and a healthier economy.**

Investing in the lives of children who've suffered trauma is a powerful way of addressing one of the nation's most pressing public health and social concerns. It supports family values, fosters social inclusion, and respects diverse cultures. In short, it creates a healthier society for us all.

*The Perryman Group, *Suffer the Little Children: An Assessment of the Economic Cost of Child Maltreatment*, 2014.

**Heckman, J. J., *The Case for Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children*, 2012.



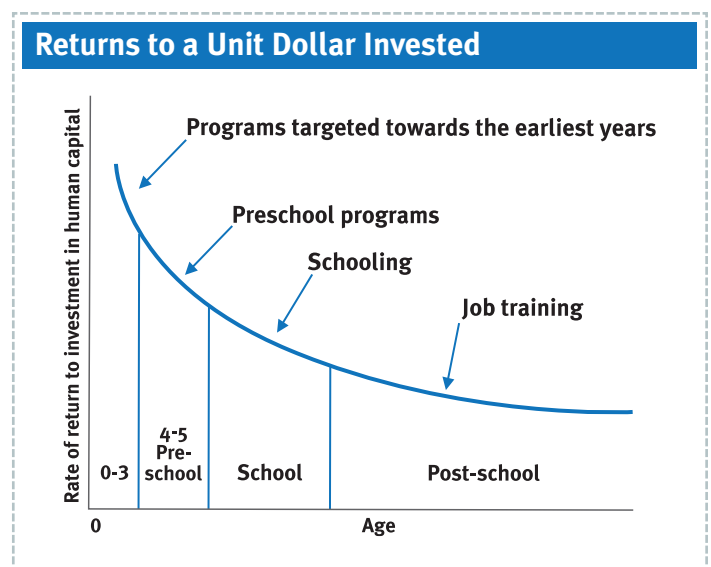
Investing in the Lives of Children: The earlier, the better

All children need effective early childhood support, but not all children get it. Poor health, dropout rates, poverty, and crime—we can address all of these issues, and reduce their costs to taxpayers, by investing early in education and developmental opportunities for at-risk kids.

Extensive evidence shows that investing in the earliest years of life produces the greatest returns in education, health, and productivity. Indeed, studies show it is much more effective to invest in high-quality early childhood programs than to provide remediation later in life, such as job training, adult literacy programs, tuition subsidies, or policing.*

What's more, investing in quality programs aimed at the early years has impressive economic benefits, in both the short- and long-term. Early interventions mean better grades, less crime, more productivity, and lower teen pregnancy rates.

In fact, economists have found that each dollar invested in high-quality early childhood programs for disadvantaged kids yields a 7–10% annual return.** Simply put, if we give children what they need when they're little, they do better in school and in life. The economy benefits, too, because schools work better, crime goes down, and the state's workforce becomes better prepared.



*Heckman, J. J., *The Case for Investing in Disadvantaged Young Children*, 2012.

**Heckman, J. J., *The White House Summit on Early Education*, 2014.



Arizona Successes

Decades of research demonstrates that high-quality programs improve the lives and health of children, with an impact that stretches into and throughout adulthood. And the benefits don't stop with the individual child; they turn into broad gains for society as a whole.

Here are a few programs that have reaped dividends for Arizona:

- **Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Consortium:**

A grassroots organization of more than 250 members that has spearheaded the cause of increasing awareness of ACEs in Arizona. The ACE Consortium has facilitated eight "Strong Communities Raise Strong Kids" workshops throughout the state, yielding more than 550 "ACE Ambassadors" who are increasing awareness about ACEs in their communities. Thanks to the consortium's efforts, tens of thousands have participated in community presentations on the

impact of adversity in childhood. (communityresiliencerecipebook.org/tastes-of-success/the-arizona-story)

- **Maricopa Cradles to Crayons (C2C):** A program that works to improve outcomes for maltreated infants and toddlers in Maricopa County through judicial leadership and community collaboration. By addressing the co-occurrence of child maltreatment, substance abuse, domestic violence, trauma, and parental mental illness, this program provides a comprehensive approach that enables the courts to address the complex needs of abused and neglected infants and children. Children assigned to the Maricopa County C2C program in FY 14 achieved permanency an average of 386 days sooner than they would have otherwise, resulting in a savings for legal representation and judicial oversight of an estimated \$590,000. (superiorcourt.maricopa.gov)

- **Strong Families AZ Statewide Home Visiting Program:**

A network of home-visiting programs that helps families raise healthy children ready to succeed in school and in life. Toddlers who participated in the Nurse-Family Partnership program, for instance, had 78% fewer days hospitalized and 23% fewer health-care visits for injuries and poisonings than their peers. Through these and other savings, Nurse-Family Partnership has an average net savings of almost \$17,000 per family. (strongfamiliesaz.com)

- **Triple P: Positive Parenting Program:**

One of the world's most effective evidence-based parenting systems, Triple P aims to prevent behavioral, emotional, and developmental problems in children by enhancing the knowledge, skills, and confidence of parents. Two years after 18 South Carolina counties were randomly assigned to implement Triple P, a US population trial funded by the CDC demonstrated a 17% reduction in abuse and neglect cases, a 16% reduction in child injuries due to maltreatment, and a 22% reduction in out-of-home placements at the county level. In an analysis of this trial, it was reported that the cost of delivering Triple P universally would be recovered in a single year by reducing by just 10 percent the number of families in which abuse and neglect occurred. Since 2010, efforts have been underway across Arizona to expand availability of the Triple P system of parenting supports. Currently, there are more than 75 Triple P practitioners in nearly a dozen Arizona agencies. (triplep.net)

What You Can Do

Here are seven actions you can take to help ensure a brighter future for Arizona:

1. Encourage businesses to join Ready Nation, a consortium of businesses that advocates for better policies for children and youth. Members educate policy-makers and the public about effective investments that will help strengthen communities, and get children school- and work- ready, so businesses have a future workforce with the knowledge, skills, and abilities they need. (readynation.org)
2. Although programs such as Triple P and home visitation are effective, they only reach a fraction of the population. Continue to support these and other evidence-based programs.
3. Tell elected officials about the value of early childhood investment.
4. Help to create a statewide plan that engages key stakeholders to learn about the impacts of ACEs.
5. Encourage local businesses and government to adopt family-friendly practices, such as child care, flex-time, etc.
6. Encourage lawmakers to support ACEs legislation that considers the impacts of early childhood adversity on the long-term health and well-being of its citizens.
7. Think about how to build a comprehensive, integrated system for identifying, screening, and treating ACEs and promoting resilience.



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