Primary Care Provider Sample Scripts: Reviewing the Questionnaire Results

This script is based on the Center for Youth Wellness/Bayview Child Health Center (CYW/BCHC) model and is an example of one way to have a discussion about your patients’ ACE score based on this tool. If you do use the ACE-Q tool, you can evaluate the results using our ACE-Q Scoring Implications worksheet.

Introducing the ACEs screening results

New research has shown that children’s exposure to stressful or traumatic events can lead to increased risk of health and developmental problems, like asthma and learning difficulties. As a result, at this clinic we now screen all of our patients for Adverse Childhood Experiences. Once again, you don’t have to tell us which ones your child experienced, only how many. I’d like to take a moment to review your responses.

Talking about a low risk (CYW ACE-Q score of 0)

Based on your responses, I don’t see any cause for concern. We now understand that exposure to stressful or traumatic experiences like the ones listed here may increase the amount the stress hormones that a child’s body makes and this can increase their risk for health and developmental problems. If, in the future, [Child's Name] experiences any of these issues, please let us know because early intervention can lead to better outcomes.

Talking about a moderate risk (CYW ACE-Q score of 1-3 with no symptoms)

I see that [Child’s Name] has experienced [Score/Result] of these items, is that correct? Based on your responses, I want to ask a few more questions about her/his health and development.

· Has [Child’s Name] experienced any significant weight gain or loss since these experiences occurred?

· How is [Child’s Name] doing in school?

· Has the teacher or school staff expressed any concerns?

· How’s [Child’s Name] sleep?

· Have you noticed any worsening of your [Child’s Name] asthma/eczema/diabetes since these events occurred?

  (Caregiver answers no and that the patient is doing fine)

We now understand that exposure to stressful or traumatic experiences like the ones listed here may increase the amount the stress hormones that a child’s body makes and this can increase their risk for health and developmental problems. At this time, it doesn’t seem like [Child’s Name] is experiencing those issues, but if, in the future, s/he does start showing symptoms, please let us know, because early intervention can lead to better outcomes.
Talking about elevated/high risk (CYW ACE-Q score of 1-3 with symptoms, 4+)

I see that [Child’s Name] has experienced [Score/Result] of these items, is that correct? Based on your responses, I want to ask a few more questions about her health and development.

- Has [Child’s Name] experienced any significant weight gain or loss since these experiences occurred?
- How is [Child’s Name] doing in school?
- Has the teacher or school staff expressed any concerns?
- How’s [Child’s Name] sleep?
- Have you noticed any worsening of your [Child’s Name] asthma/eczema/diabetes since these events occurred?

(Caregiver responds yes)

We now understand that exposure to stressful or traumatic experiences like the ones listed here may increase the amount the stress hormones that a child’s body makes and this can increase their risk for health and developmental problems.

Because of what [Child’s Name] has experienced, I am concerned that this may be contributing to her problems in school/worsening asthma/weight gain. Some of the things that have been shown to help the body recover from adversity and normalize those stress hormones include good nutrition, healthy sleep, regular exercise, therapy, mindfulness — like meditation and healthy relationships.

I’d like to refer [Child’s Name] to some services that could be helpful.

(Describe referral and resources available at your setting. This may include a “warm hand-off” or formal referral to an internal mental health or behavioral health provider integrated into the clinic, or may be a referral to a partner agency.)

We also know that a healthy caregiver is one of the most important ingredients for healthy children so the same applies to you mom/dad/grandma/auntie. Reducing or managing your stress level is one of the best things that you can do for [Child’s Name] to improve his/her health and development.

(Provide appropriate patient education materials)

Source: These scripts were developed based on the Bayview Child Health Center/Center for Youth Wellness model of ACEs screening that uses a scoring system of 0 (i.e., low risk of ACEs-associated negative health outcomes), 1-3 with no symptomatology (moderate risk), and 1-3 with symptoms or 4+ (high risk).