

FACES Assessment Guidance for Schools

Overview

The FACES Assessment is a universal, population-level screening tool designed to identify the most commonly experienced adversities within a student or staff population. Administering this assessment enables schools to align resources with student needs, target funding where it is most needed, and identify strategic community partners.

Background: Expanded ACEs

Developed in 2017, the FACES Assessment expands on the original 10-item ACEs questionnaire created by Felitti et al. (1998) and adapted by Ande (2011). The expanded version includes 24 items, capturing a broader range of potentially traumatic experiences such as exposure to community violence, racism, incarceration, economic hardship, academic pressure, and more.

Understanding Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are traumatic events that occur before the age of 18. These experiences disrupt healthy brain development and may result in behavioral, academic, and health issues. Children may react with emotional outbursts, avoidance, risk-taking, or defiance—often as survival responses rather than intentional misbehavior.

The Value of Universal Screening in Schools

Universal screening allows for early identification and equitable intervention. By assessing the full student population, schools can prevent escalation of trauma-related issues, allocate resources effectively, and track intervention outcomes over time.



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Survey Administration

Delivery Methods

- Electronic (preferred for data analysis)
- Paper (alternative for limited tech access)

Sample Size

Aim to survey the entire student body for accurate representation. Small samples may introduce bias or fail to capture the full picture of need.

Scoring and Interpretation

Total ACE Score

Each 'Yes' response is scored as 1. Scores range from 0 to 24. Questions 2 and 14 include follow-up items not counted in the total score.

Frequency of Specific ACEs

Rank ACEs by frequency to identify the most common types of adversity, which can guide prevention and intervention planning.

Frequency of Scores

Identify the most frequently occurring scores. The resulting scores and corresponding percentages can be used to identify the level of need according to the multi-tier system of support model (see). Results can also inform the adoption of prevention and intervention strategies and relevant community partners.

For students with a score of 3 or below, focus on Tier 1 mental health promotion and support.

For students with a score of 4 to 12, focus on Tier 2 population-specific mental health support.

For students with a score of 13 or more, focus on Tier 3 individual-specific mental health support.



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Tiered Recommendations Based on ACEs Scores

Previous research has reported a breakpoint of 4 to be significantly associated with risk behaviors and adverse physical and mental health outcomes in adolescents (Felitti et al., 2002). Four continues to be the chosen breakpoint in studies that use expanded ACEs questionnaires (Bethell et al., 2014). This breakpoint remains the same, regardless of the number of ACEs assessed. The assumption can be made that the number of participants with a score of four or more have an increased risk of emotional disturbance.

Tier 1: Universal Supports

- Trauma-informed teaching
- Social-emotional learning (SEL)
- Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Tier 2: Targeted Supports

- SEL or counseling groups
- Mentoring programs
- Academic supports and tutoring

Tier 3: Intensive Supports

- Individual counseling
- Behavior intervention plans
- Wraparound services with community partners

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in Education

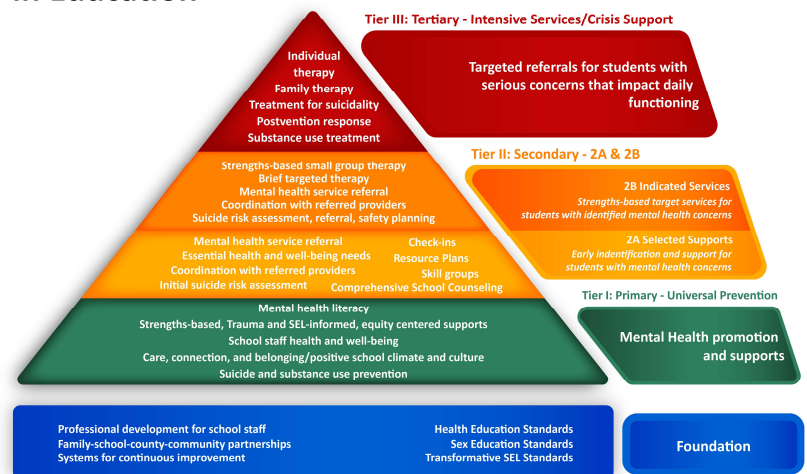


Figure 1. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) in Education, Oregon Department of Education

Contact

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Citations

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- MTSS Figure 1: Oregon Department of Education Resources and information to promote mental health and well-being <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/mental-health/Pages/MTSS.aspx>. [Multi-Tiered Systems of Support \(MTSS\) in Education.png \(5163×3793\) \(oregon.gov\)](#)

