

FACES Assessment Guide for Faith-Based Organizations

Overview

The FACES Assessment is a trauma-informed screening tool designed to identify adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) among youth and families engaged in faith-based ministries and services. By incorporating this tool, faith leaders and staff can better understand the needs of their community, promote healing, connect members to appropriate supports, and demonstrate the ministry's role in addressing trauma and fostering resilience through spiritual and relational care.

Background: Expanded ACEs

The FACES Assessment builds on the original 10-item ACEs questionnaire developed by Felitti et al. (1998) and adapted by Ande (2011), expanding to 24 total items. It includes a broader range of adversities that often impact children and families in congregational settings such as racism, housing instability, bullying, and loss of a loved one providing a more complete picture of the challenges faced by those seeking spiritual and community care.

Understanding ACEs in Faith-Based Settings

Many individuals turn to their faith community for hope, healing, and connection. However, unresolved childhood adversity can impact emotional health, relationships, and engagement with ministry activities. Faith-based leaders equipped with tools like the FACES Assessment can respond with empathy, provide informed spiritual guidance, and help bridge individuals to additional support systems that align with their healing journey.

The Value of Universal Screening

Incorporating trauma screening into ministry programming can:

- Identify the needs of youth and families served through outreach and discipleship
- Inform ministry curriculum, support groups, and counseling services
- Reduce stigma by acknowledging trauma's impact through a spiritual lens
- Build partnerships with mental health professionals and community organizations
- Enhance grant applications and program evaluations by using real data



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Survey Administration

Delivery Methods

- Paper or digital format administered in youth ministries, support groups, or wellness classes
- Can be led by trained volunteers, pastors, or ministry staff

Sample Size

Aim to offer the survey broadly within programs such as youth ministries, parenting classes, or support groups. Participation should always be voluntary and conducted with sensitivity and confidentiality.

Scoring and Interpretation

Each 'Yes' answer is assigned one point. Scores range from 0 to 24. Follow-up questions provide context but are not included in the score. A score of 4 or more may indicate that an individual is at higher risk for emotional and behavioral challenges. Ministry leaders can use this information to:

- Offer or refer to trauma-informed counseling or pastoral care
- Adapt teaching or ministry responses for those navigating pain
- Support families in building safe, stable, and nurturing environments

When aggregated across programs, scores can:

- Identify trends that shape ministry focus
- Guide sermon series, workshops, and small group content
- Inform partnerships with faith-based mental health providers and family service organizations

Integration Strategies

To implement the FACES Assessment effectively:

- Provide training on trauma-informed ministry and the purpose of the tool
- Ensure emotional safety and privacy when facilitating the survey
- Develop prayer, healing, and referral pathways based on results



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Scripture Tie-Ins for Trauma-Informed Ministry

****Psalm 34:18**** – 'The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.'

Use this verse to affirm God's nearness to those who have endured hardship and loss.

****Isaiah 61:1**** – 'He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.'

This verse can anchor healing-focused sermons and prayer groups, emphasizing spiritual restoration.

****Romans 12:15**** – 'Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.'

A reminder for ministry teams to practice empathy and provide space for emotional honesty.

Prayer Group Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to walk alongside someone who is carrying hidden pain?
- How can our church or group be a refuge for young people facing adversity?
- Are there ways God has healed you from something difficult? How might you share that story with someone who is struggling?
- How can we incorporate more prayer, scripture, and support into our youth or family ministries in light of what we learn from FACES?

Volunteer Training Considerations

Volunteers working with youth and families should receive basic orientation in trauma-informed ministry, including:

- Understanding what ACEs are and how they show up in behavior
- Responding with compassion, patience, and boundaries when youth express distress
- Knowing when and how to refer to pastoral care or mental health professionals
- Maintaining confidentiality and creating emotionally safe spaces
- Using language that affirms identity, value, and hope



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Contact

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Citations

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