

Analysis Brief

Pre-Birth Challenges Impact Early Childhood Experiences

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Background

The ALCANLink project started with a group of Alaskan children whose mothers responded to the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) survey over a three-year period shortly after the children were born. Every year, project analysts check to see whether any of the children have been reported to child welfare or receive services from other public programs. As the children get older, we can calculate the risk (Incidence Proportion) of a maltreatment report, child education readiness, and other outcomes over time. Using these data, we are also able to explore information on pre-birth factors from their mothers' PRAMS responses that increase or decrease the chance a child is reported to child welfare, as well as the early childhood family context of Adverse Childhood Experiences.

This handout outlines some of the key findings from this novel Alaska specific data resource.

Key Findings from ALCANLink

Incidence of child maltreatment

- Approximately **43%** of children born in Alaska will experience an allegation of harm (be reported for any reason) before their 12th birthday
 - Before age 12 years, 34% will have a report screened in for investigation, 14% will have a report substantiated, and 8% will experience a removal for any amount of time.
- Children born in recent years have similar risk of being reported to OCS by age 3 compared to those born about 10 years ago (**Figure 1**).

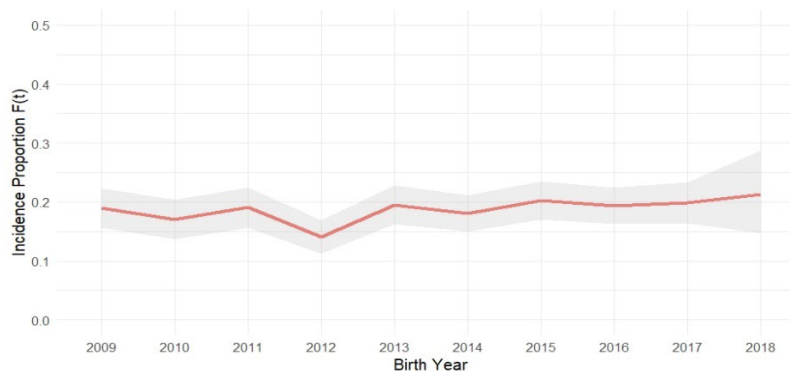


Figure 1. Incidence Proportion of First Maltreatment Report by Age and Birth Year

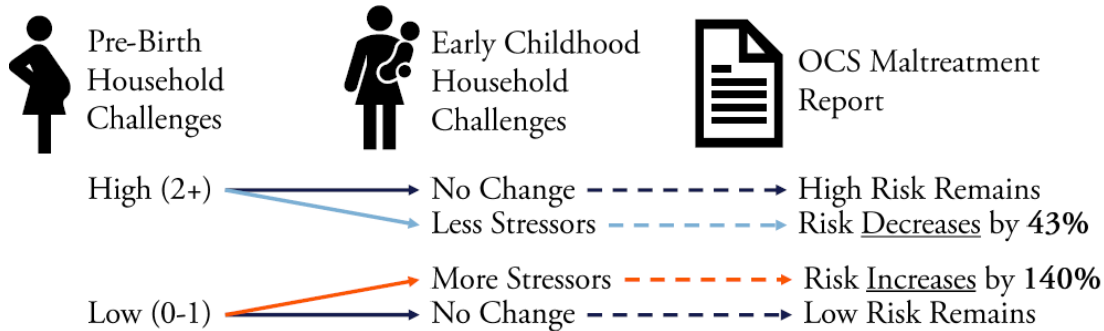
Incidence of child maltreatment and ACEs scores can be predicted before birth

- The accumulation of pre-birth household challenges during the approximately 12 months before birth of a new child (e.g., divorce, financial struggles or homelessness, mental illness of a family member, incarceration of a family member, inter-partner violence) often cluster together and have additive impact on negative child outcomes:
 - Relative to children born to households reporting zero challenges:

- The risk of being reporting to child welfare increases systematically for each additional household challenge reported.
- For each additional pre-birth challenge reported, a systematic relative increased in average childhood ACE score at age three was detected.

Families are dynamic and risk can be modified

- Two primary groups describe pre-birth household risk: those with 0-1 challenge reported (low adversity group) and those with 2+ challenges reported (high adversity group).
 - Among the high adversity group, those that transitioned to low adversity during childhood observed a 43% relative reduction in risk of being reported to child welfare before age 3.
 - Among the low adversity group, those that transitioned to high adversity during childhood observed a 140% relative increased in risk of being report to child welfare before age 3.



Accumulation of household challenges predict school readiness and early reading

- Many children struggle to meet early reading score benchmarks and development. For each additional challenge reported the probability of having adequate or passing 3rd grade reading scores systematically decreases. A substantial and significant impact to reading, development assessment, and attendance is markedly among those reporting 4+ pre-birth challenges.

A strong start is critical to child development

Data from Alaska suggests that indicators such as the risk of experiencing a report of harm and proportion of children born into homes experiencing multiple household challenges have not changed in Alaska over the past decade. To “move the needle”, our Alaska research suggest that helping families address challenges early (before birth) and throughout childhood will result in reduced reports to child welfare, fewer removals, and improved childhood educational performance. Every family is different and may need different supports at different times. The complexities of childhood adversities that result in trauma require interventions from a range of physical, mental, and emotional health programs. Alaska data documents that the single best way to prevent ACEs and reduce the impact after they occur is to support families by linking parents to tailored financial, behavioral and community support. Connecting with, and navigating these systems is a huge challenge for Alaska Families. Help Me Grow Alaska is available to all families at no cost and a critical link that has been missing from maltreatment prevention and is centered on providing tailored caregiver supports.