

# Trusted Adult

Among Public High School Students in Oklahoma



## Trusted Adult/ACEs/PCEs

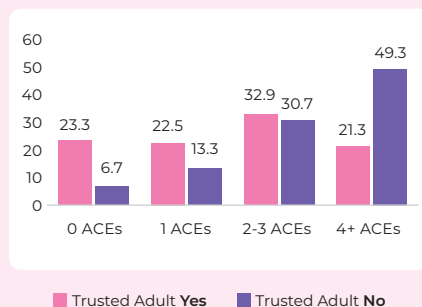
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are potentially traumatic events that occur during childhood (0-17 years) and can include experiencing violence, abuse, or neglect; witnessing violence in the home or community; losing a family member to suicide; or experiencing instability in the home due to familial substance use, mental health problems, or parental separation. Positive childhood experiences (PCEs), such as having a trusted adult in their lives can potentially buffer the harmful effects of ACEs during childhood and into adulthood.

## What do the data say?

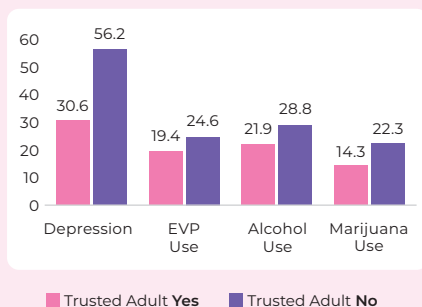
Data from the **2023 Oklahoma Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)** show that:

- **42.1%** of students reported they “most of the time” or “always” felt that they were able to talk to an adult in their family or another caring adult about their feelings (trusted adult).
- **48.7%** reported that they “most of the time” or “always” felt that they were able to talk to a friend about their feelings (trusted friend).
- **51.2%** “agreed” or “strongly agreed” they felt close to people at their school (supportive school).
- Students who reported having a trusted adult in their lives reported higher prevalence of having one or fewer ACEs and a lower prevalence of 4 or more ACEs than students without a trusted adult (Figure 1).
- Additionally, students who reported having a trusted adult reported lower prevalence of depression, EVP use, alcohol use, and marijuana use than students without a trusted adult (Figure 2).

**Figure 1.** ACEs Composite Score by Trusted Adult Status: Oklahoma YRBS 2023



**Figure 2.** Prevalence of Depression, EVP Use, Alcohol Use, and Marijuana Use by Trusted Adult Status: YRBS 2023



## Recommendations

- Be someone who talks, not tells - have open conversations with your youth that include listening and engaging as opposed to lecturing or giving orders.
- Ask questions, offer support and encouragement – trusted adults can help build confidence in a young person's ability to share themselves with others.
- Refer out – encourage young people to accept resources, sometimes youth may require additional supports such as counseling or social services.
- Be honest – being open and honest yourself is important for building trust, and setting boundaries is also important, so remember to share appropriately.
- Be transparent – remind your youth that confidentiality is not guaranteed if you feel they are in danger.

## Resources

For more information on how to become a trusted adult, please visit the following links:

<https://healthokgov.app.box.com/v/lets-talk-toolkit/folder/174928361399>

<https://www.nami.org/>

<https://oklahoma.gov/health/ftt.html>

For resources for youth, please visit the following links:

<https://988lifeline.org/>

<https://bigoklahoma.org/>

<https://oklahoma.gov/odmhsas.html>

For more information, contact the Family Support and Prevention Service, Assessment Division, at **(405) 426-8092** or visit [oklahoma.gov/health/yrebs](https://oklahoma.gov/health/yrebs).