

family snapshots:

NAVIGATING CHILD DISCIPLINE AND FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS



Parenting through the COVID-19 pandemic is challenging.

Stay-at-home orders and household disruptions caused by the pandemic may have added stress on family relationships. This may have affected parenting practices, including child discipline. Additionally, some families experienced intimate partner violence (IPV).

We asked caregivers¹ how the pandemic impacted their families' relationships.

This is What We Heard:



Caregivers' Use of Discipline



5 in 6 caregivers reported not spanking their children in the past week.



Many caregivers reported using a variety of **positive parenting strategies** to discipline their children during the pandemic.



“Spending more time at home with my kids has brought us closer. Even though my wife and I might argue in front of them, we try our very best to not let them see it. We **spend more time without kids and do things we didn't do before** COVID such as indoor learning activities and gardening just to name a few.”



The Challenges of Parenting During the Pandemic



1 in 6 caregivers reported spanking their child(ren) in the past week and **1 in 2** parents reported yelling or threatening their child.



1 in 5 caregivers (men and women) reported experiencing IPV.



3 in 5 caregivers who reported spanking their children, also reported IPV in the household.



Compared to households without children and youth with special health care needs (CYSHCN), **more** caregivers with CYSHCN reported:

- Feeling **overwhelmed and stressed**
- Using **harsher discipline** and
- Experiencing **IPV**



More positive forms of child discipline include **explaining, distracting, sending them to their room, or timeout.**



Harsh forms of child discipline include **spanking, threatening, and yelling.**



Intimate partner violence (IPV) is **abuse or aggressive behavior** such as mental and emotional harm, physical and sexual violence, or stalking occurring in a romantic relationship.



Why It Matters



Harsh discipline and IPV are adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). ACEs are potentially traumatic events that occur in childhood, which may have **long-lasting effects** on individuals.



Harsh discipline has little effect on problematic child behavior in the short-term and is **not effective in the long-term**.



Most parents use **positive discipline strategies first** and tend to use harsh discipline out of frustration.



By working together to prevent ACEs and promote positive parenting strategies, we can **improve** adult outcomes in:

- **Health**
- **Behavior**
- **Life potential**



Ways to Promote Positive Discipline Strategies

We all have a role to play in supporting caregivers and creating [safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments](#)² for children. Here are some ways you can support families in your community:



Work to develop **trusted, respectful, and supportive** relationships with patients and families.



Talk with families about their specific needs, recognize their challenges, and offer them support.



Connect families to **resources**, like the AAP parenting website [healthychildren.org](#)³, that [promote positive discipline strategies](#)⁴.



Learn the [signs and behaviors of IPV](#)⁵ and educate families and others.



Support **community programs**, like [home visiting](#)⁶, that help create safe and healthy conditions for families.



Share these ways of addressing ACEs and promoting positive discipline strategies with families and others.

Working together, we can support families to **navigate through stressors** worsened by the pandemic, **build resilience**, and **create more opportunities for families to thrive**.

To learn more about how you can help create a better tomorrow, visit bit.ly/FamSnapshotsC19

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¹ Data reported in this infographic were collected as part of the Family Snapshot Surveys:

aap.org/en/patient-care/family-snapshot-during-the-covid-19-pandemic/

² cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/CM_Strategic_Direction--OnePager-a.pdf

³ healthychildren.org/English/Pages/default.aspx

⁴ healthychildren.org/English/family-life/family-dynamics/communication-discipline/pages/disciplining-your-child.aspx

⁵ cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/riskprotectivefactors.html

⁶ healthyfamiliesamerica.org/

