

# DON'T JUDGE THE STUDENTS

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# A LITTLE ABOUT ME

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- I served as the County Judge of Adams County for 31 years.
- Hence I was the youth court judge all those years
- Chaired Council of Youth Court Judges for 8 years
- Every day I learned something new
- The last two decades were marked by substantial scientific research which required a culture change of how we approach at risk children and families

# SILLY SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

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- Clothes related
  - Color
  - Type of coat
  - Sagging
- Disrespect
- Minor altercations
- Truancy

# CULTURE DRIVEN BY ZERO TOLERANCE

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- Bad kids disrupts education
- Education for those who want to learn
- Suspend them so education can continue
- We owe them no duty
- We ask them “What is wrong with you”

# ZERO TOLERANCE = ZERO INTELLIGENCE

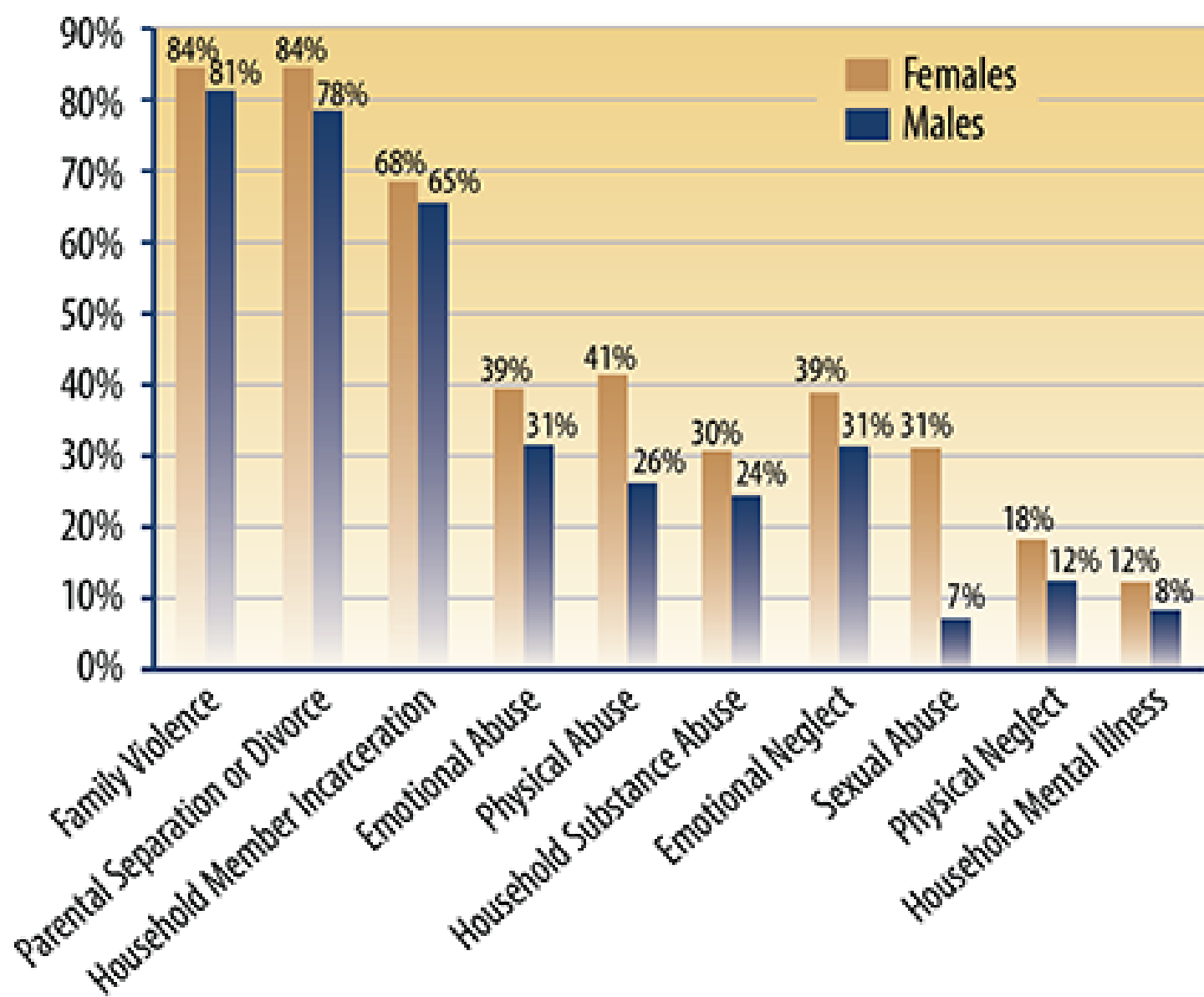
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- Destroys the myth that education is the great equalizer
- Allows us to avoid asking the key question
- Why are you behaving this way?
- Why are you not coming to school?
- Children living in poverty and racial minorities are overrepresented in suspended and expelled students.
- Must change the culture

# ACES—ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

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- Research in the late 1990's
- This population has numerous ACES usually 3 or more
- Those experiences negatively impact
  - Educational achievement
  - General behavior
  - Socialization
  - Health disorders
  - Depression
  - Addictive behaviors



# CHANGE THE CULTURE

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- Accept the responsibility to ensure that we do everything to educate all children, even the difficult ones.
- We change the question...
  - We asked in past “What’s wrong with you?”
  - Now we ask “What happened to you?”
- ❖ We must address the underlying trauma experienced by these young people and addressed early and often.



# STATISTICS TELL THE STORY

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Compared with children with no ACEs, children with 3 or more ACEs were:

- ❖ Almost 3x more likely to experience academic failure,
- ❖ Nearly 5x more likely to have severe attendance problems,
- ❖ 6x more likely to have severe school behavior problems, and
- ❖ Almost 4x more likely to report frequent poor health.

# CHANGE THE CULTURE

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- Some Schools are properly addressing this population
  - Rather than approaching as willful behavior, they address behaviors as symptoms of exposure to ACES
- We must creatively respond with approaches that
  - Provides safety and safe place for the child at school
  - Foster connections with the child with staff and peers in school
  - Manage emotions

Schools are in unique position to be the change agent

Exciting that schools are now developing trauma informed strategies



# BORROW FROM CHILD WELFARE

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- Child Protection Services (CPS), in the foster care arena is required to demonstrate that they performed all reasonable efforts to prevent removal of a child from home. This is the federal standard.
- School administrators, before exercising a suspension or expulsion, ask have I done all reasonable efforts to prevent the suspension/expulsion.
- Then only those which are a public safety risk are suspended. We must find another way for all others addressing their needs.

# THANK YOU

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A program of the Mississippi Supreme Court

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