



## Appendix D: Considerations for ACE Questionnaire Use in the Primary Care Setting

Remember that this is not a standardized test or validated assessment tool for risk prediction. A low or zero score does not denote the absence of trauma. Before providing the questionnaire, explain the purpose of ACEs assessment and ask permission e.g., “I have some questions of a sensitive nature. May I have your permission to ask them today?” Let the patient know they do not have to answer questions they are not comfortable with, and their responses will be kept confidential.

1. The ACEs questionnaire takes about 2-5 minutes to complete. The questionnaire should be provided to the patient in a private setting away from other patients, and **where support is readily available** (e.g., not in the waiting room).
2. The patient provides their total (de-identified) ACE score if they choose to disclose it. A “de-identified score” is the total number of “yes” responses. The practitioner does not need to know the answer to each question. It is not necessary to know the history and details of the experiences, or the score itself, unless the patient indicates an interest in discussing further.
3. When appropriate, acknowledge the score, discuss further with the patient (when and if they are ready), validate and acknowledge past trauma, ask “how is this affecting you now?” and offer support ([Appendix G: Validating and Invalidating Statements and Curious Questions](#)).\*
4. The questionnaire can be retained in the patient’s chart or sent home with the patient.
5. Incorporate the ACE score and your understanding of its impact into your ongoing care of the patient.

\* Some individuals may experience an adverse reaction to a moderate or high score; there is a risk that some will perceive their score as a rigid determinant of poor health, feel stigmatized, and/or become despondent/resigned to a less hopeful path. This experience highlights the need for mental health supports to be immediately available to those that are scored, please see [Appendix H: Patient, Family, and Caregiver Resources](#) for more information.