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 caregivers how the pandemic impacted their families' relationships.

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:

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.

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.
Ways to Promote Positive Discipline Strategies

We all have a role to play in supporting caregivers and creating safe, stable, nurturing relationships and environments 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, that promote positive discipline strategies.

- **Learn** the signs and behaviors of IPV and educate families and others.

- **Support community programs,** like home visiting, that help create safe and healthy conditions for families.

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

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

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](bit.ly/FamSnapshotsC19)