Poly-victimization
Childhood Exposure to Multiple Forms of Victimization
What is Poly-Victimization?

- Refers to experiencing multiple, different types of victimization
  - Example: Physical abuse by a caregiver, bullying at school, and witnessing an assault in one's neighborhood

- Children with highest number of exposures considered poly-victims
  - Exposure to over 7 types of victimization in the last year
Effects of Poly-Victimization

- Many children identified as victims of one form of violence are poly-victims
- Half of sexually victimized youth are poly-victims
- Strongest predictor of psychological symptoms
- Matters less which type of victimization a child experiences in comparison to how many different types of abuse sustained
Why the Powerful Effects?

- Represents life condition of victimization rather than set of events
- Creates threats to safety, stability, and nurturance in multiple domains
- Damages resources (e.g. social support, coping, self-esteem, social competence) that would normally buffer impact of victimization
Implications for Practitioners

- Inquire about victimization experiences in all major settings of a child’s life
- Interventions which focus only on one type of victimization may fail to identify contexts placing children at greatest risk
- Use poly-victimization assessments to better understand and promote effective treatment
Implications for Practitioners

- Provides holistic and child-centered approach to evaluating and responding to victimized youth

- Consistent with core philosophy of children’s advocacy centers
Measures to Assess Poly-victimization

- **Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ)**
  - Instrument used in the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV)
  - Largest nationally representative dataset on youth victimization
  - Freely available
  - Simple, straightforward language
Measures to Assess Poly-victimization

To learn how to assess poly-victimization, see NCAC White Paper titled “Poly-Victimization: Childhood Exposure to Multiple Forms of Victimization