

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

<http://www.nationalcac.org/images/pdfs/CALiO/poly-victimization%20-%20childhood-exposure-to-multiple-%20forms-victimization.pdf>