

How to Assess Poly-victimization in Your Work: Approaches & Tools

Summary of Key Points

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Poly-victimization refers to experiencing multiple different types of victimization, such as physical abuse by a caregiver, bullying at school, and witnessing an assault in one's neighborhood. Poly-victimization is the strongest predictor of psychological symptoms in multiple national studies. Accurate assessment of the true burden of victimization can improve your work and be integrated into your practice.

How to incorporate the assessment of poly-victimization into your work

- (1) The JVQ or other instruments which assess multiple victimizations can be incorporated into intake assessments to obtain a more comprehensive and accurate picture of a child's victimization exposure.
- (2) Poly-victimization assessment can enhance needs assessment by documenting service priorities in a community or sometimes for a special population, such as children in foster care.
- (3) Poly-victimization assessment can be a key component of program evaluation by increasing the scope of outcome measures, and can help track program effects that may be overlooked.
- (4) Poly-victimization assessment can advance existing basic research on maltreatment and other forms of victimization.

Assessing poly-victimization

There are numerous measures available that can be used to assess poly-victimization.

Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire (JVQ)

[The Juvenile Victimization Questionnaire \(JVQ\)](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/jvq/) is a freely available and widely used tool for assessing poly-victimization. The JVQ is used in the National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), which is the nation's primary surveillance mechanism for youth victimization and the largest nationally representative dataset on youth victimization. Careful word-by-word attention was given to every item to make sure each item expressed each type of victimization in simple, straightforward language that can be understood by as many youth and parents as possible. The JVQ has established reliability and validity and several different forms are available, see <http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/jvq/>.

Other Tools That Assess Multiple Forms of Youth Victimization

North Shore Trauma History Checklist
Childhood Experiences of Violence Questionnaire
Adverse Childhood Experiences Scale

Conclusion

Ensuring the safety and well-being of children is the primary mission of Children's Advocacy Centers (CACs) and all of the organizations and multidisciplinary professionals that are part of the CAC. Incorporating poly-victimization assessment into the work of CACs will help us identify the true burden of victimization and offer the hope of more child-centered, holistic and effective services that will better ensure the safety of all children.

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