



PODCAST TRANSCRIPT:

**POLY-VICTIMIZATION: CHILDHOOD EXPOSURE TO MULTIPLE FORMS OF VICTIMIZATION
FEATURING HEATHER A. TURNER, PH.D**

Intro: Hello, and welcome to the National Children's Advocacy Center's new podcast series on Poly-victimization; made possible with support from the Office for Victims of Crime.

The NCAC models, promotes, and delivers excellence in child abuse response and prevention through service, education, and leadership. I am Muriel Wells, Research Librarian for the National Children's Advocacy Center and the host of this series which will showcase current poly-victimization topics, and discuss cutting-edge research.

I am pleased to welcome Dr. Heather Turner, who is joining us today to talk about Poly-victimization: Childhood Exposure to Multiple Forms of Victimization. Dr. Turner is Professor of Sociology and Senior Research Associate at the Crimes against Children Research Center at the University of New Hampshire. Dr. Turner has 13 years of research experience on childhood exposure to violence, has conducted numerous national surveys, and has published over 70 articles, many focusing on the patterns of childhood victimization and mental health.

Question: Dr. Turner, thank you for joining us.

Answer: Response from Dr. Turner

Question: We know that far too many children are exposed to different types of abuse and violence. How is the concept of "poly-victimization" different from what we already know about say, sexual abuse or bullying?

Answer: Instead of focusing on specific *individual* types of victimization, such as sexual abuse or bullying, Poly-victimization instead refers to the experience of *multiple* victimizations of *different kinds*. So it focuses on how the same children often experience *many* different types of victimization... like sexual abuse, bullying, physical abuse, witnessing family violence and exposure to community violence.

Question: Why is this important?

Answer: We think that a greater understanding and emphasis on poly-victimization can help professionals identify the most endangered children, to provide the most appropriate and effective interventions, and to better protect them from additional harm in the future.

Question: I know that you and your colleagues have conducted quite a bit of research on poly-victimization. What are some of the things that you have found?

Answer: First of all, we discovered that many of the children who are routinely identified as victims of child abuse or bullying or other single forms of violence are in fact poly-victims who

have experienced many different types of victimization. For example, we found that one-half of all sexually victimized youth are also poly-victims. Also, we found that poly-victimization is more strongly related to trauma symptoms than experiencing chronic, repeated victimization of single, even serious, types. In addition, our research shows that poly-victimization explains most of the psychological consequences of individual victimizations types that we have seen again and again in child victimization research and in our practice settings. In other words, the fact that we see strong associations between physical abuse, for example, and mental health problems, is because many child abuse victims are also poly-victims.

Question: So why does poly-victimization have such a powerful effect? What is it about poly-victimization that makes it so damaging for children?

Answer: Well, we certainly have more to learn about this. But when you take a look at the lives of poly-victims, you see that we're not talking about just set of victimization events, but instead violence is more of a life condition for these children. They are experiencing substantial threats to safety, stability, and nurturance in multiple life domains – at home, at school, and in their neighborhoods. So there few or no contexts where they can function without feeling threatened. And not only are these kids experiencing an unusually large amount of stress and adversity, it is also likely that poly-victimization damages the kinds of resources, like self-esteem, coping, self-efficacy and social competence, that would normally help to buffer the impact of victimization.

Question: Is there any advice you might give to practitioners who work with abused children or youth who are at risk for experiencing various other forms of violence and victimization?

Answer: We would like to encourage all providers who work with children, no matter their particular specialty, training, or focus, to inquire about victimization experiences in all the major settings of a child's life: home, school, and neighborhood. Practitioners can use poly-victimization assessments to better understand the risks that their clients face and promote more effective treatment. Interventions that focus on only one form of victimization, such as sexual abuse, without attention to other types of violence exposure, may fail to identify the contexts placing children at greatest risk. Importantly, poly-victimization really points to the need to move towards a more holistic and child-centered approach to evaluating and responding to victimized youth.

Closing: Thank you for sharing such valuable information.

Thank you for tuning into this podcast on Poly-victimization: Childhood Exposure to Multiple Forms of Victimization. For information on Poly-victimization, and to review other helpful resources, please visit the National Children's Advocacy Center's website at www.nationalcac.org. That's: w-w-w dot n-a-t-i-o-n-a-l-c-a-c dot o-r-g.

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