PODCAST TRANSCRIPT:
POLY-VICTIMIZATION AMONG CHILDREN IN THERAPY
FEATURING SHERRY HAMBY, 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 back Dr. Sherry Hamby, who will join us today to talk about, “Poly-victimization Among Children in Therapy.” Dr. Hamby is a Research Professor of Psychology at Sewanee, the University of the South, founding editor for the journal Psychology of Violence, and co-investigator for the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence.

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

Answer: I am pleased to be here. Thank you for inviting me, Muriel.

Question: In this podcast series, we have been talking about various aspects of children's exposure to violence. Today we are going to focus on children with therapist contact.

Answer: Yes. We know that poly-victimization is disturbingly common even in the general population of U.S. youth. We wanted to look at our data to see if children who have been in contact with a therapist or counselor had elevated rates of poly-victimization.

Question: Can you explain what you mean by “poly-victimization”?

Answer: Poly-victimization refers to the experience of multiple different types of victimization. We often think about abused children and bullied children as separate groups, for example, but our research shows those are often the same children, getting victimized both at home and at school. We use the term poly-victim to refer to the mostly highly victimized sub-group of children, who have experienced 7 or more types of violence. Surprisingly, it turns out that poly-victimization is more strongly related to trauma symptoms than experiencing chronic, repeated victimization of single, even serious, types.

Question: So did your research find that kids in therapy are more likely to be poly-victims?
Answer: Yes, they are, more than 3 times as likely. We found out that more than 1 in 4 children who had even a single therapist contact were poly-victims, compared to 9% of the rest of the population.

Question: So, that sounds high, but children who see therapists would be expected to be experiencing difficulties, wouldn't they?

Answer: Yes, that is true, but we discovered that poly-victimization was more common than many other common reasons for seeking therapy, including internalizing disorders, such as depression, which were reported by 17% and externalizing disorders, such as conduct disorder, which were also reported by 17%. Poly-victimization was far more common than suicidal ideation, which was 9% of the sample of kids with therapist contact. Therapists should be on the lookout for this common problem.

Question: What else should therapists know about victimization in this population?

Answer: Well, children in therapy were also more likely to have experienced severe violence, including violence with a weapon, that caused an injury, or was a sexual victimization.

Question: What do you think would be important for practitioners who work with children to know about this issue? What should they be doing differently?

Answer: One particularly important take-home message of these data is the need to go beyond the presenting problem or reason for referral. Nine out of ten children who have seen a counselor in the past year have experienced two or more forms of victimization and more than half have sustained more than 5 types. Most clinicians would not consider conducting an intake without assessing for suicidality or depression, but an extensive burden of victimization and even the possibility of ongoing safety issues are far more common problems.

End: Thank you for sharing such valuable information.

Thank you for tuning into this podcast on Poly-victimization Among Children in Therapy. 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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