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. Heather Turner, who is joining us today to talk about “Poly-victimization among Children with Disabilities”. 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 75 articles, many focusing on the patterns of childhood victimization and mental health.

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

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

Question: We know that, unfortunately, there are many children who are abused and victimized. Why the particular focus on children and youth with disabilities?

Answer: Past research has found that children with disabilities are at greater risk of experiencing various individual forms of victimization, such as maltreatment and bullying. We thought it was important to also consider whether disability places children at risk for poly-victimization and whether any specific types of disability may be particularly likely to increase this kind of risk.

Question: What do you mean by “poly-victimization”?

Answer: Poly-victimization 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. We discovered in our research that poly-victimization is more strongly related to trauma symptoms than experiencing chronic, repeated victimization of single, even serious, types. Our research also shows that poly-victimization explains most of the psychological consequences of individual victimizations types, like sexual abuse or physical maltreatment that we have seen again and again in child victimization research and in our
practice settings. So identifying which children are at greatest risk of poly-victimization is very important.

**Question:** So did your research find that kids with disabilities are more likely to be poly-victims?

**Answer:** Yes we did. Using data from the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV), which was a nationally representative study on the victimization experiences of US children ages 1 month to 17 years, we looked at several different forms of disability and how they were associated with victimization. Defining poly-victimization as exposure to seven (7) or more different forms of victimization in the past year, we found that the percentage of children who qualified as poly-victims was almost twice as high among those diagnosed with any form of disability than among those with no disability (over 13% of children with disabilities compared to less than 7% of those without any disability). But some children were especially at risk: 15% of children diagnosed with Attention Deficit with Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experienced poly-victimization and almost a quarter of youth with internalizing disorders, such as Major Depressive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), were poly-victims.

**Question:** Why do you think these particular disabilities are associated with especially high risk for poly-victimization?

**Answer:** Well it’s interesting, because I think when most people think of disability, it is physical disabilities and maybe cognitive disabilities that most immediately come to mind. But the finding that children with ADHD and those with internalizing disorders are most likely to experience poly-victimization suggests that disorders that are typically more “invisible,” (not readily apparent to others) but that likely affect social skills and interaction patterns, may create the greatest vulnerability to 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:** I think many professionals who serve children are aware of victimization risk and are already doing a great deal to address these problems. But I think our research on poly-victimization, particularly among children with disabilities, shows that it is important for practitioners working with children with disabilities, whether they are in clinical, school, or home settings, to conduct comprehensive assessments of victimization exposure that take into account a wide array of different types of victimizations in all major settings of the disabled child's life. Comprehensive victimization assessments (ones that assess child physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, bullying, community violence, property crime, and so on) will help practitioners create more effective interventions for children with disabilities. Intervening in one area is less likely to be effective or helpful if children are unsafe elsewhere. And we need to be aware that children with emotional and behavioral disabilities are among those that may suffer the most from poly-victimization. So we need to be aware that disabilities that are not readily apparent or easily recognized are often linked to risk for victimization in many setting of
children’s lives…. And prevention of victimization needs to be part of how we support and help kids with disabilities.

End: That is a great note to end on. Thank you for sharing such valuable information.

Thank you for tuning into this podcast on Poly-victimization: Poly-Victimization among Children with Disabilities. 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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