

## Poly-victimization Among Children with Disabilities

# Defining “Disability”

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- ▶ No universal definition
- ▶ Includes broad array of chronic conditions that limit functioning
  - ▶ Emotional and behavioral disorders (e.g. depression)
  - ▶ Physical disabilities (e.g. limitations in hearing, sight, or mobility)
  - ▶ Developmental and learning disabilities (e.g. attention deficit disorder, autism, or cognitive disability)

# What is Poly-Victimization?

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- ▶ Refers to experiencing multiple, different *types* of victimization
  - ▶ (e.g. physical abuse by a caregiver, bullying at school, and witnessing an assault in one's neighborhood)
- National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence (NatSCEV) defines poly-victimization as exposure to 7 or more different forms of victimization in the past year

# Effects of Poly-Victimization

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- ▶ Strongest predictor of psychological symptoms
- ▶ Matters less which *type* of victimization a child experiences in comparison to how many *different* types of abuse sustained

# NatSCEV Statistics

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- ▶ Children with disability twice as likely to qualify as poly-victim compared to children with no disability
- ▶ 15% of children diagnosed with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) experienced poly-victimization
- ▶ 11.5% of children with a physical disability were poly-victims

# NatSCEV Statistics

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- ▶ 11.7% of children with a learning disorder (other than ADHD) were poly-victims
- ▶ 23% of youth with internalizing disorders (such as Major Depressive Disorder, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) were poly-victims

# Implications

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- ▶ Disorders that are “invisible,” but affect social skills and interaction patterns, may create greatest vulnerability to victimization
- ▶ Practitioners working with children with disabilities, including clinical, school, and home settings, should conduct comprehensive assessments of victimization exposure
- ▶ Will help create effective interventions for children with disabilities in all areas of a child’s life