Prevention of Poly-victimization: Comprehensive and Connected Approaches
Summary of Key Points

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Exposure to many different types of trauma across various settings in a child’s life—a phenomenon known as poly-victimization—highlights both the critical need for prevention strategies and the complexity of what such efforts will need to look like. Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC) professionals are well positioned to take a leading role in preventing poly-victimization, given their strong collaborations across many settings (schools, families, communities and youth development organizations) and their ability to see the intersections among children’s victimization experiences. There are a number of efforts that child maltreatment professionals can take toward prevention of poly-victimization.

- Connect parents and children to prevention resources as part of intervention services for families who have experienced or are at risk for poly-victimization.
  - Promising prevention approaches supported by research are home visiting, early intervention programs for young children (Olds, 2006), and “Big Brothers Big Sisters” for older children (See Hamby & Grych, 2013 for a review).
- Include prevention activities in intervention efforts.
  - Because poly-victimization involves so many different types of violence exposure, true prevention of poly-victimization will require the integration of many types of violence prevention. Child abuse professionals can teach these prevention skills as part of their intervention activities.
- Encouraging bystanders to take action to defend and support victims and reduce opportunities for perpetration.
  - “Stop it Now!” has a training for community members to help them identify and intervene to prevent child sexual abuse (http://www.stopitnow.org/).
  - “Enough Abuse Campaign” in Massachusetts is working to help youth development professionals create new organizational policies and trainings to prevent child abuse (http://enoughabuse.org/index.php/the-campaign/training-tools).
- Use the professional networks and opportunities that child maltreatment professionals have to work across settings (in schools and with community members) to be a voice for the importance of prevention.

Professionals working in CACs may not traditionally define prevention as part of their work. Yet, with the collaborative work they do with professionals across settings and across types of victimization, they bring a unique and important perspective to child abuse prevention. CAC professionals have important roles to play in helping to teach prevention messages, advocating for new, more comprehensive and interconnected prevention efforts, helping prevention professionals understand the impact of prevention efforts on poly-victimized children, and in connecting families and children to key prevention resources. More attention to prevention is needed and more resources devoted to high quality programs. Practitioners who work daily on clinical interventions with children and adolescents who have been poly-victimized are in a unique and important position to also be advocates for prevention. They witness firsthand the widespread and damaging effects of poly-victimization and can speak most eloquently about how urgent it is to keep further victimization from happening.