IMPACT OF TRAUMA

Victimization and exposure to violence can have serious, long-lasting consequences. Traumatic experiences early in life can even affect the developing brain. The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study, which analyzed detailed personal histories given to medical providers by more than 17,000 adults, demonstrated significant links between traumatic experiences in childhood and a wide range of physical, emotional, and behavioral problems later in life. This study, along with the results of the National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence, confirms that the consequences of victimization are many times worse for individuals who witness or experience multiple types of crime, violence, or abuse.

www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/235504.pdf

Vision 21: Transforming Victim Services, recently released by the DOJ’s OVC, Office of Justice Programs, acknowledges these critical findings and calls for greater attention to the holistic needs of crime victims.

www.ovc.gov/vision21

Additional information on women crime victims can be found in the first Federal Partners Report on Women and Trauma. http://nicic.gov/Library/025082

How a Trauma-Informed Approach Can Make a Difference

OVC is committed to enhancing the Nation’s capacity to assist crime victims and to providing leadership in changing attitudes, policies, and practices to promote justice and healing for all victims of crime. Recognizing that exposure to multiple types of violence and other adverse experiences, sometimes called “poly-victimization,” is highly predictive of trauma among children and adults, OVC supports initiatives to raise awareness among the general public and a wide range of professionals, and to educate victim service providers about effective interventions.

Through grants that support partnerships with professional associations and development of easily accessible public awareness materials, OVC seeks to engage every member of every community throughout the country. This work supports the Attorney General’s Defending Childhood Initiative, a national effort to protect children from exposure to violence, to help them heal from trauma they may have experienced, and to help them thrive and resume healthy, rewarding lives.

www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/
Major Accomplishments 2010-2013

OVC recently released a series of videos and resources to raise awareness about children who have been exposed to violence, highlight promising practices, and show how trauma-informed care can help child victims recover. [www.ovc.gov/throughoureyes](http://www.ovc.gov/throughoureyes) One video introduces evidence-based mental health interventions to address trauma, including Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Child-Parent Psychotherapy.

OVC focuses attention on the critical role of medical and mental health professionals in identifying and intervening with children exposed to violence. With OVC’s support, the American Academy of Pediatrics developed educational materials to promote the medical home approach, an evidence-based intervention for children exposed to violence. OVC also awarded funding to the American Psychological Association to develop a curriculum about effective trauma-focused, evidence-based interventions for children exposed to violence. OVC is collaborating with the Administration for Children, Youth, and Families to adapt this curriculum for child welfare professionals.

OVC plans to publish Achieving Excellence: Model Standards for Serving Victims and Survivors of Crime in late 2013. Originally released in 2003, the Model Standards promote competence and ethical integrity of victim service providers; quality and consistency of service for crime victims and their families; and the importance of a victim-centered and trauma-informed approach.

New Directions and Collaborations

With the publication of the Vision 21 report, OVC will build on its legacy of partnerships within the Justice Department, other federal agencies, and stakeholder constituency groups to expand the body of knowledge about victimization and extend the reach of its services to victims in communities throughout America and beyond.

OVC will continue to support collaborations to improve the response to victims of crime, including sexual violence and human trafficking. OVC coordinates with DOD’s Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Office to encourage partnerships between victim assistance providers and military personnel. OVC also spearheads an initiative to address the needs of American Indian/Alaska Native sexual violence victims. Numerous federal and tribal agency representatives contribute to this effort, which will result in national guidelines for a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach to victimized tribal women and children. OVC is also working in partnership with DHHS and the Department of Homeland Security to develop and implement a Federal Strategic Action Plan on Services for Victims of Human Trafficking.

Additional Resources

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[www.ovc.gov](http://www.ovc.gov)