

Crimes Against Children

Building Resiliency in Children After Trauma

Melanie Cooley, LSW

Victim Services Coordinator

melanie.cooley@ohioattorneygeneral.gov

(614) 466-5263



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Objectives

- Recognize trauma and how it may manifest in children
- Discuss resiliency and how to reinforce and develop it



The Big Picture

- Trauma affects health and productivity
- Increases the risk that children will engage in violent behaviors as adults
- Financial impact on social service systems, law enforcement, and education



What's at Risk?

- Exposure to violence in any form harms children
- Different forms of violence have different negative impacts
- Trauma can cause major disruptions of basic cognitive, emotional, and brain functioning needed for development



What's at Risk?

- Children exposed to psychological trauma and violence are often:
 - Frozen in the “flight-or-fight” response
 - Defending themselves even if danger is not imminent



What's at Risk?

- Child victims are at greater risk for:
 - Aggressive and/or disruptive behaviors
 - Posttraumatic stress disorder
 - Anxiety and depressive disorders
 - Alcohol and drug use
 - Poor school performance
 - Risky sexual behavior
 - Repeated victimization



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Trauma

- A traumatic experience involves:
 - A threat to one's physical or emotional well-being
 - Elicits intense feelings of helplessness, terror, and lack of control

American Psychiatric Association, 2000



Trauma

- Witnessing or experiencing an event that poses a real or perceived threat
- An event that overwhelms a child's ability to cope



Types of Trauma

- **Acute trauma:** a single traumatic event that is limited in time
- **Chronic trauma:** the experience of multiple traumatic events - often cumulative
- **Complex trauma:** exposure to chronic trauma usually caused by adults entrusted with the child's care



Types of Trauma

- **Historical trauma:** a personal or historical event or prolonged experience that continues to have an impact over several generations (i.e. slavery, relocation, genocide)



Trauma in the Context of Children

The impact of trauma depends on several factors:

- The child's age and developmental stage
- The child's perception of the danger faced
- Whether the child is a victim or a witness



Trauma in the Context of Children

- The child's relationship to the perpetrator or victim
- The child's history of trauma
- The challenges the child faces after trauma
- The presence of adults who can offer support and protection after trauma



How Trauma May Manifest

- Depression and withdrawal
- Malformations in the brain, cognitive delays
- Suicide attempts
- Bedwetting
- Separation anxiety, clinginess



How Trauma May Manifest

- Difficulties eating and sleeping, nightmares
- Relationship problems, anti-social behavior
- Anxiety and intrusive thoughts
- Impulsivity, risk taking behavior
- Alcohol and drug use



How Trauma May Manifest

- Promiscuous sexual behavior
- Rage, outbursts
- Hyper-alert
- Recreating the event through drawing or play
- Numbness, denial



How Trauma May Manifest

- Guilt, shame
- Aches and pains
- Regression



What is Resiliency?

- The ability to:
 - Adapt well over time to life-changing situations and stressful conditions.
 - Recover readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like; buoyancy



3 Domains Help Develop Resiliency

- The characteristics of the child
- The family climate
- The extended social environment



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Persistence

- Works on something until it is finished
- Tries to succeed on a task after failing
- Stays committed to his/her goal
- Remains encouraged



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Goal-Oriented/Motivated

- Has goals that are important to him/her
- Works hard to accomplish goals
- Enjoys having goals and meeting them



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Adaptability

- Feels comfortable with change
- Believes there are many ways of seeing things
- Can easily compromise



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Optimism

- Usually enthusiastic, cheerful, and confident
- Hopeful that things will improve in the future



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Willingness to approach novel events

- Finds it easy to go to new places
- Enjoys interacting with new people
- Can return to a place where he/she had a bad experience



Characteristics of Resilient Children

High Self-Esteem

- Thinks he/she is a lot of fun to be around
- Believes he/she can handle stressful things
- Likes him/herself



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Intelligence

- Generates creative or novel solutions to unexpected problems
- Can identify similarities between a new problem and one he/she has already solved



Characteristics of Resilient Children

Good Social Skills

- Asks for help when he/she needs it
- Makes friends easily and keep them
- Avoids fights



Family Climate

- Family cohesion
- Supportive parent-child interaction
- Extended family support
- Cultural and spiritual beliefs
- Community service, volunteerism



Extended Social Network

- Positive school experiences
- Community resources
- Peers and mentors
- Organized recreation, sports, and arts programs



Supporting Children and Families

- Recognize some children are naturally resilient
- Let children and families know what will happen next
- Give children control over some aspects of their lives
- Help children maintain connections



Supporting Children and Families

- Help caregivers manage emotional triggers
- Create safety plans with families
- Identify existing or potential trauma triggers for the child and ways to cope with them
- Recognize and build on existing strengths



Supporting Children and Families

- Support the continuity of relationships
- Understand children's reactions to traumatic events over time
- Increase our repertoire of evidence-based treatments for children and families
- Disseminate evidence-based treatments for children, families and the community



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The seal of the Attorney General of the State of Ohio is a circular emblem. It features a central landscape with a rising sun over mountains and a river. The text "THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE STATE OF OHIO" is inscribed around the perimeter, with a five-pointed star at the bottom center. The word "QUESTIONS" is superimposed in large, bold, blue, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the seal, with a reflection effect below it.

QUESTIONS



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THANK YOU!

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Resources

- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families Child Welfare
Information Gateway
[https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/mentalhealth/com
mon/resiliency.cfm](https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/mentalhealth/com
mon/resiliency.cfm)
- US. Department of Justice Defending Childhood: Report of
the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children
Exposed to Violence
<http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf>



Resources

- The National Child Traumatic Stress Network Child Welfare Training Toolkit Version 2.0 <http://learn.nctsn.org/>
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration http://www.samhsa.gov/children/trauma_resilience.asp
- www.nctsn.net
- www.istss.org
- www.ncptsd.va.gov



Resources

- <http://www.sanctuaryweb.com/institute.php>
- www.nrepp.samhsa.gov
- www.crimesolutions.gov
- www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/
- <http://www.colorado.edu/cspv/blueprints>

