

Exposure to Trauma in Children Served by Behavioral Health Services

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History of Exposure To Trauma

- Prevalence of childhood trauma is an urgent public health problem that is largely a preventable cause of mental illness and health problems later in adulthood (Felitti, 2009; Sharfstein, 2006)
- More than 60% of children and youth in US were victims of or witnessed violence in previous year, with almost 2/3 of these children experiencing more than one type of trauma (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, Hamby, & Kracke, 2009)
- When experience of trauma goes unaddressed in childhood, epidemiological evidence demonstrates that childhood exposure to trauma has negative consequences that increase the risk for lifelong problems (Felitti et al., 1998)



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Exposure to Trauma and SOC's

- Most research focused on the child welfare system (Walrath, Ybarra, Sheehan, Holden, & Burns, 2006)
- Children being served by community-based programs have been overlooked
- One study from CMHS national evaluation (N = 1,157):
 - Over 75% of youth had experienced at least 1 type of trauma or a PTSD diagnosis
 - Among those youth, 83.1% were in clinical range on problem behaviors (CBCL; Macro International Inc, 2007)
- Although SOC's have been highlighted as a promising approach to promote coordination among systems, children's exposure to trauma is often not identified or addressed



Symposium Overview

- 3 studies on children who have been exposed to trauma and were enrolled in behavioral health services:
- **Presentation 1** examines relationships between young children's exposure to family violence, caregiver stress, and the child's posttraumatic stress symptoms
 - **Presentation 2** looks at how exposure to traumatic events impacts children's strengths and problem behaviors over time in a school-based SOC
 - **Presentation 3** focuses on young children in an early childhood SOC and provides detailed analyses of trauma exposure for these young children

