Trauma Experiences of Children Served by Early Childhood Systems of Care
Cindy Crusto, Ph.D., Meghan Finley, Ph.D., Jo-Ann Gargiulo, B.S., Lesby Payne, B.A., and The Rhode Island Positive Educational Partnership

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Vision

Children age birth to 11 years will reach their full potential through partnership with family, school and community within positive and nurturing educational environments that embrace their strengths, diversity and respond to their individual needs.

Mission

To establish a sustainable family and youth-driven, culturally and linguistically competent integrated system of behavioral health care, early care and education, and education that will support all children age birth to 11 years with serious emotional challenges.

Population of Interest

- Children age birth to 11 years
- Diagnosis of emotional, behavioral, or mental disorder (DSM-IV, ICD-9, DC:0-3)
- Disability present for one year or the potential to persist for at least one year
- At risk for out of home placement, more restrictive placement, or in placement due to disability
- In need of multi agency intervention

Goals

- Develop sustainable infrastructure that systematically fosters collaboration among SWPBIS schools, behavioral health community, early care and education, and broader social service system;
- Expand clinical/family support infrastructure and increase access to wraparound planning, supports, and clinical and social services by reaching children and their families in the naturalized early care and education and school setting and creating easily accessed paths for support; and
- Meld system of care values and principles with the operational structure and approach of SWPBIS schools and early care and education settings.

Initial System
Why study trauma experiences of young children/youth participating in SOC?

Prevalence
- Trauma is pervasive among children, youth, and families in the United States, particularly for children and youth involved in public systems (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007).
- About 15.5 million American children from ages birth to the age of 17 years old live in dual-parent households in which intimate partner violence has occurred during the past year (McDonald et al., 2006).
- Based on data from child protective services (CPS) agency investigations and assessments, approximately 906,000 children were victims of child abuse and neglect in 2003 (U.S. DHHS, 2005).
- In a study of parent and partner violence in families with young children, Smith Step and C'Leary (2005) found that 90% of the 453 families studied, some type of physical aggression (adult-to-adult and/or parent-to-child) occurred in the past year.

Response to existing position statements and reports
- NASMHPD Position Statement on Services and Supports to Trauma Victims and Their Families (NASMHPD, 2007).
- NCCP Position Statement on Services and Supports to Trauma Victims and Their Families (NCCP, 2007).
- NASMHPD Youth Position Statement on Services and Supports to Trauma Victims and Their Families (NASMHPD, 2007).

Why study trauma experiences of young children/youth participating in SOC?

Response to existing position statements and reports
- NASMHPD Position Statement on Services and Supports to Trauma Survivors (NASMHPD, 2007).
- Strengthening Policies to Support Children, Youth, and Families Who Experience Trauma Experience Trauma (NCCP, 2007)

Advancing knowledge and research literature
- The literature discusses the need for more complex research methodologies and advanced data analytic techniques to improve our understanding of trauma outcomes and the mechanisms through which trauma affects children.
- Potential for a new DSM-IV diagnosis called: Developmental Trauma Disorder (American Psychological Association, 2007).

Extending previous research with young children’s trauma experiences
- Leary (2005) found that in 90% of the 453 families studied, some type of physical aggression (adult-to-adult and/or parent-to-child) occurred in the past year.

Initial Questions
- What are the trauma experiences of children/youth enrolled in the Longitudinal Outcome Study?
- What is the relationship between trauma and internalizing and externalizing behaviors?
- What is the relationship between trauma and children’s/youths’ emotional and behavioral strengths?
Sample Characteristics

- 43 children and their families
  - represents ~50% of all children in SOC
- Age range from 5.5 - 12 years
  - \(X^2 = 9.3\) years
- 84% boys; 16% girls
- 9% African American, 50% white
- 21% Latino/Hispanic

98% of children live at home

- 58% of children live with both parents;
  - 35% live with their mother only
- 84% of families fall below the poverty line
  ($20,650 according to 2007 standards)
- 48% of children/youth diagnosed with Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorders

Traumatic Events Screening Inventory, Parent Report, Revised (TESI-PRR)

- Assesses history of exposure to different types of traumatic events
  - 24 items
  - accidents, natural disasters, death of someone close to the child, assault, attacks by animals, domestic violence, war, community violence, and sexual abuse
  - response categories: “yes”, “no”, or “unsure”

Child Behavior Checklist, 6-18 (CBCL)

- Assesses symptoms and behavioral and emotional problems of children and youth children aged 6-18 years
  - Caregiver report only for this study
  - 3-point Likert-scale: “not true” to “very true”
  - Total scale, 2 broadband scales
  - Inter-item reliability for this sample
    - Internalizing (.78), Externalizing (.85)

Behavioral and Emotional Rating Scale- Parent Rating Scale (BERS-2C)

- Caregiver report to identify the emotional and behavioral strengths of children age 5.5 - 12 years.
  - 4-point Likert-scale: “not at all” to “very much”
  - Higher scores indicate greater strength
    - Strength subscales range from 1 - 16
    - Average subscale range is 6 - 12
  - Total inter-item reliability for this sample=.87

Findings

Children’s Trauma History Baseline (n=43)
Findings (N=43)

• **Separation** (41%)
  – 98% separated from parent
  – Occurred between ages 5 & 6.5

• **Family Violence** (22%)
  – 94% exposed to violence between parents
  – 10% weapon used
  – Occurred between ages 6 & 7.5

• **Non-Family Violence** (22%)
  – 95% neighbors
  – 56% weapon used
  – Occurred at approximately age 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>CBCL-11-18 Average Score</th>
<th>Clinical Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>37.0 (n = 41)</td>
<td>20-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attention</td>
<td>35.6 (n = 41)</td>
<td>20-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School</td>
<td>34.5 (n = 41)</td>
<td>20-60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rule-breaking behavior</td>
<td>31.0 (n = 41)*</td>
<td>&gt;70.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Behavioral and Emotional Problems**

|                  |                           |                |
| Social problems  | 65.5 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Thought problems | 63.5 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Rule-breaking    | 64.5 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Withdrawn        | 64.2 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Somatic Complaints | 58.3 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Anxious/Depressed| 66.5 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Attention problems| 68.7 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |
| Aggressive behavior| 69.9 (n = 41)             | >70.0          |

**Internalizing Problems**

|                  |                           |                |
| Interacting       | 63.0 (n = 41)*            | >70.0          |
| Externalizing     | 67.5 (n = 41)*            | >70.0          |
| Total Problems    | 66.4 (n = 41)*            | >70.0          |

Summary of Results

• **Trauma experiences of children/youth enrolled in the Longitudinal Outcome Study**
  – Average of 3.89 trauma experiences (range 0, 10)

• The relationship between trauma and internalizing and externalizing behaviors is unsupported
  – Internalizing: F (1, 41) = 1.88, p = n.s.
  – Externalizing: F (1, 41) = 0.00, p = n.s.

• The relationship between trauma and children’s/youths’ emotional and behavioral strengths is supported
  – BERS: F (1, 41) = -4.282, p < .045

Future Directions

• Examine the role of developmental processes in the impact of trauma on young children’s mental health adjustment
  – Temperament, self-regulation, attachment, predictive factors

• Examine the role of family characteristics and processes in the impact of trauma on young children’s mental health adjustment
  – Caregiver depression, substance use/abuse, stress and strain

• Assess trauma contextual factors (age at first exposure, etc.)

• Examine developmental trajectory of trauma exposure (outcomes over time)

• Examine broader array of potential outcomes
  – Peer functioning, functional outcomes, resilience