

***TRAUMA LEAVES CHILDREN BEHIND:
The Effects
of Violence, Traumatic Stress
and
Depression on Academic
Achievement and
School Attendance***

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National Child Traumatic Stress Network ***SAMHSA***

The mission of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN) is to raise the standard of care and improve access to services for traumatized children, their families and communities throughout the United States.

Important Local Partnership

**LOS ANGELES COUNTY
DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL
HEALTH - Network of Child
Serving Public Agencies**

**Working Group for Safer Schools –
City/Mayor's Office, Law
Enforcement, Human Relations,**

Important Facts About Schools

- **Education Statistics**
 - **15,000 School Districts**
 - **100,000 Schools**
 - **70% Children K-12 in Schools**
 - **50% of Total US Population Connected to Schools**

Schools have become the de facto source of mental health services for children

Traumatic Events That Affect Children

- **Trauma is embedded in the fabric of daily life**
 - Child Abuse and maltreatment
 - Domestic violence
 - Community violence
 - Criminal victimization
 - Medical trauma
 - Traumatic loss
 - Accidents and fires

Range of Traumatic Events

- Natural disasters
 - Earthquakes
 - Floods, mudslides
 - Hurricanes
 - Tornadoes
 - Dislocation/Loss of Homes
 - Volcanic eruptions



Events of the Last Ten Years That Changed Education

- 1990-2006 School Shootings - 600
- 1995 - Oklahoma City
- 2001 - 9/11 Terrorist Attacks NYC/DC
- 2001 – Present The War on Terrorism
- Iraq War/Afghanistan/Middle East
- 2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

Terror in School and Community

May 1927 Bath MI

Jan 1979 San Diego CA

Feb 1984 Los Angeles

May 1992 Yuba CA

Jan 1993 Grayson KY

Jan 1993 Los Angeles

Feb 1993 Los Angeles

Apr 1993 Sheridan WY

Feb 1994 Fort Meyers FL

May 1994 Union KY

Jan 1995 Redlands CA

Nov 1995 Lynnville TN

Feb 1996 Moses Lake WA

Feb 1997 Bethel Alaska

Oct 1997 Pearl MS

Dec 1997 Paducah KY

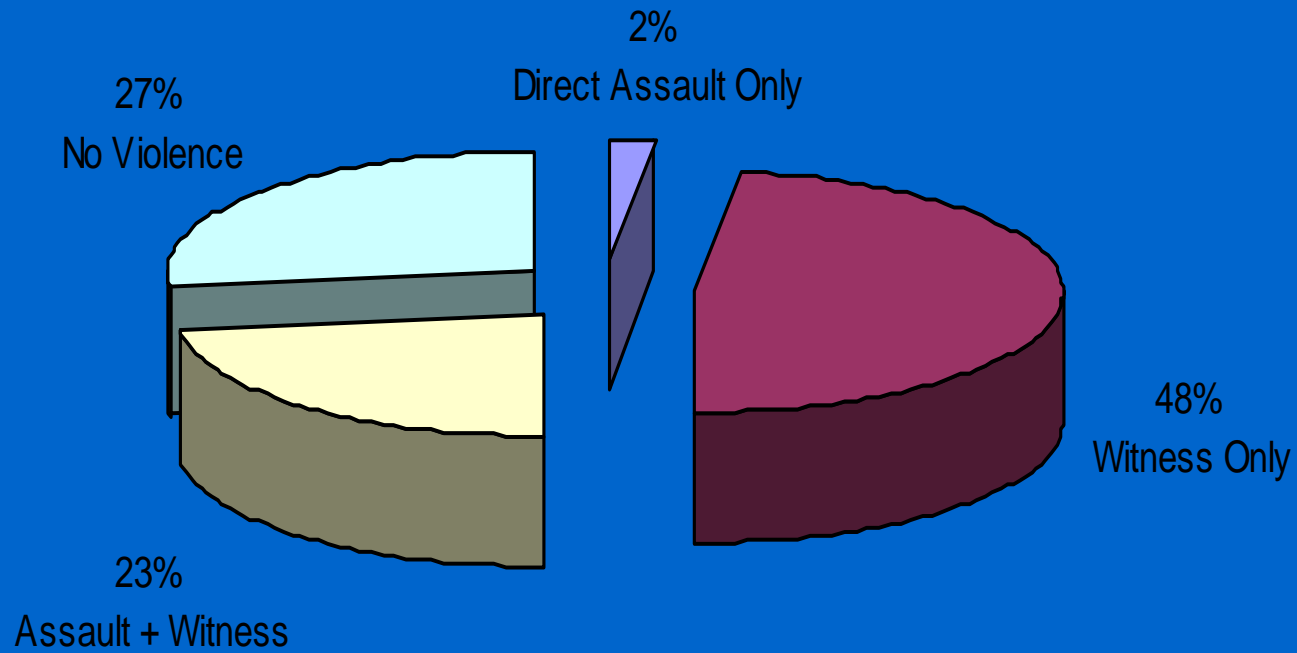
Range of Traumatic Events

- School Related Violence
- Bullying
- Gang Violence and Threat
- Internet Sources of Information, Values, Instruction

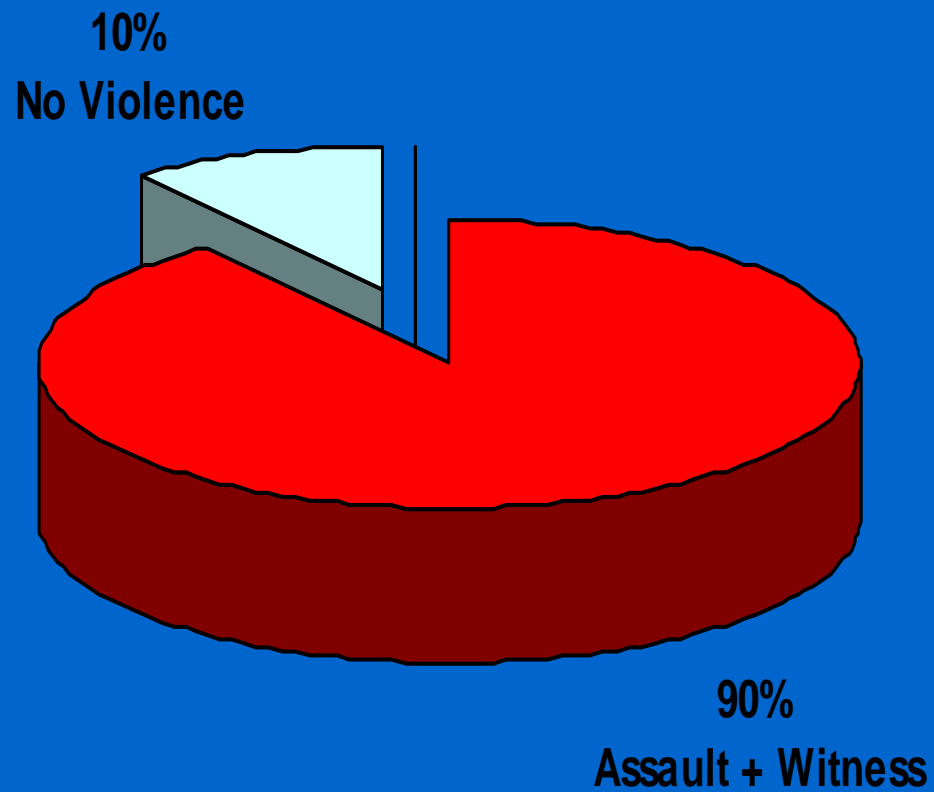
“Interpersonal violence is one of the most significant public health issues facing America” - C. Everett Koop, 1992

- **National Studies: 20% - 50% of children in the U.S. exposed to community violence**
- **Disproportionately affects urban, poor, and minority youth**

National Survey of Adolescents Prevalence of Violence History (N=1,245) Kilpatrick et. al., 1995



**Survey of Middle School Students
Prevalence of Past Year Violence
Stein et. al., 2003**

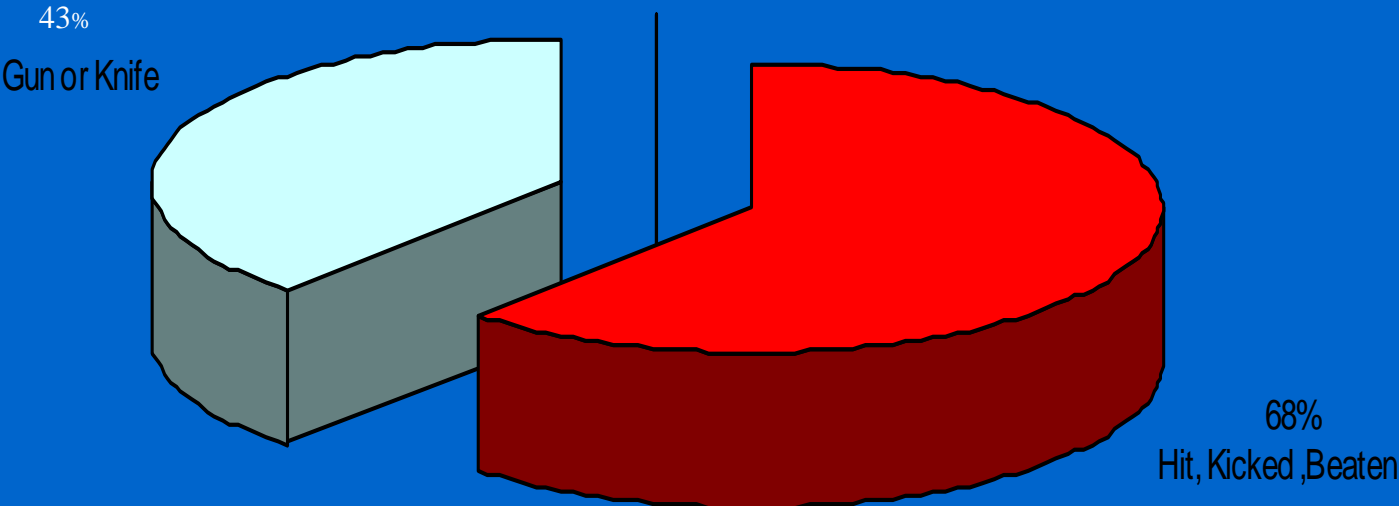


Survey of Middle School Students Prevalence of Past Year Violence

Stein et. al., 2003 N=770

Less than 10 Previously Referred for MH Services

27% PTSD 16% Depression



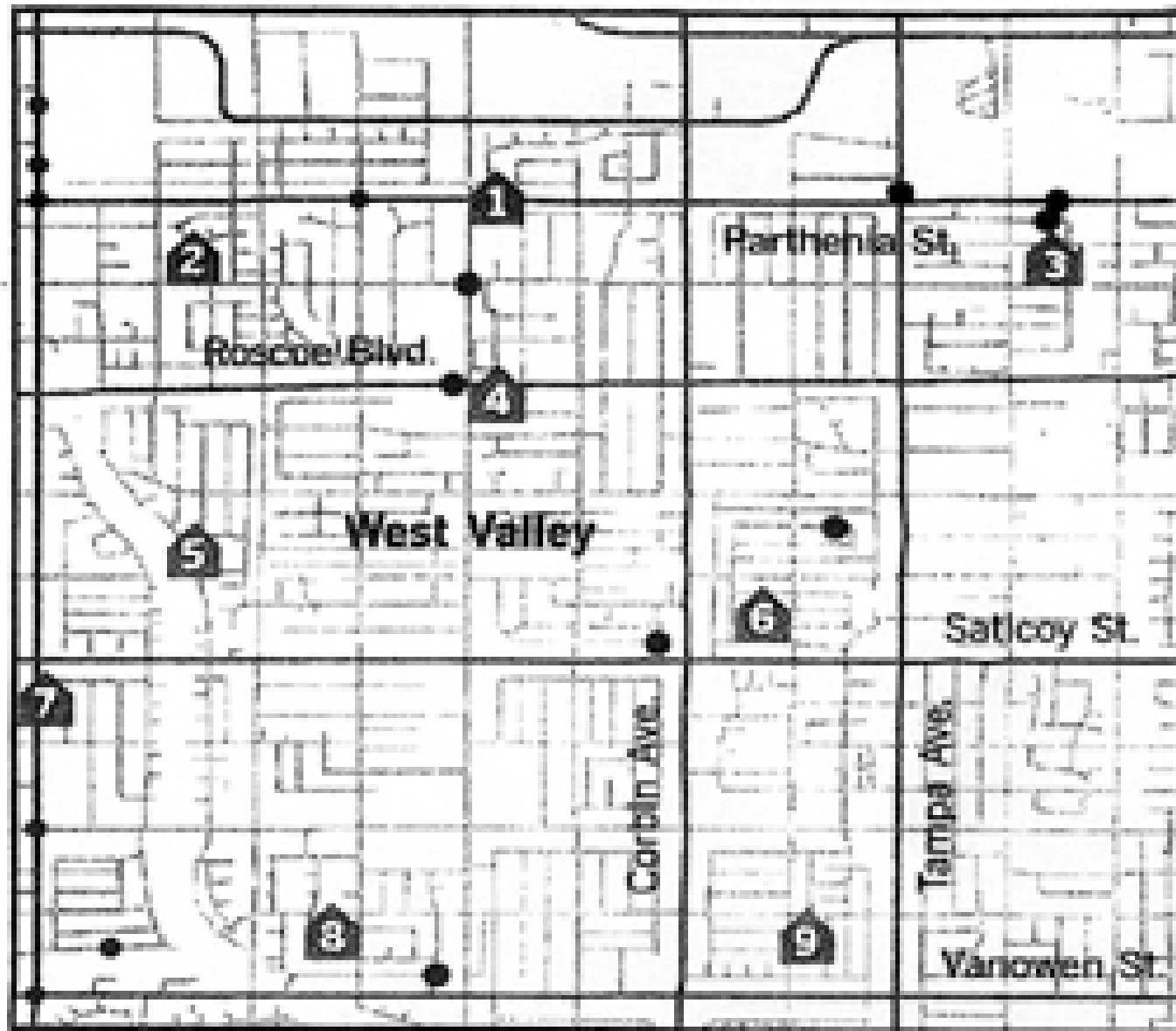
Violence Exposure and Symptoms (n=770)

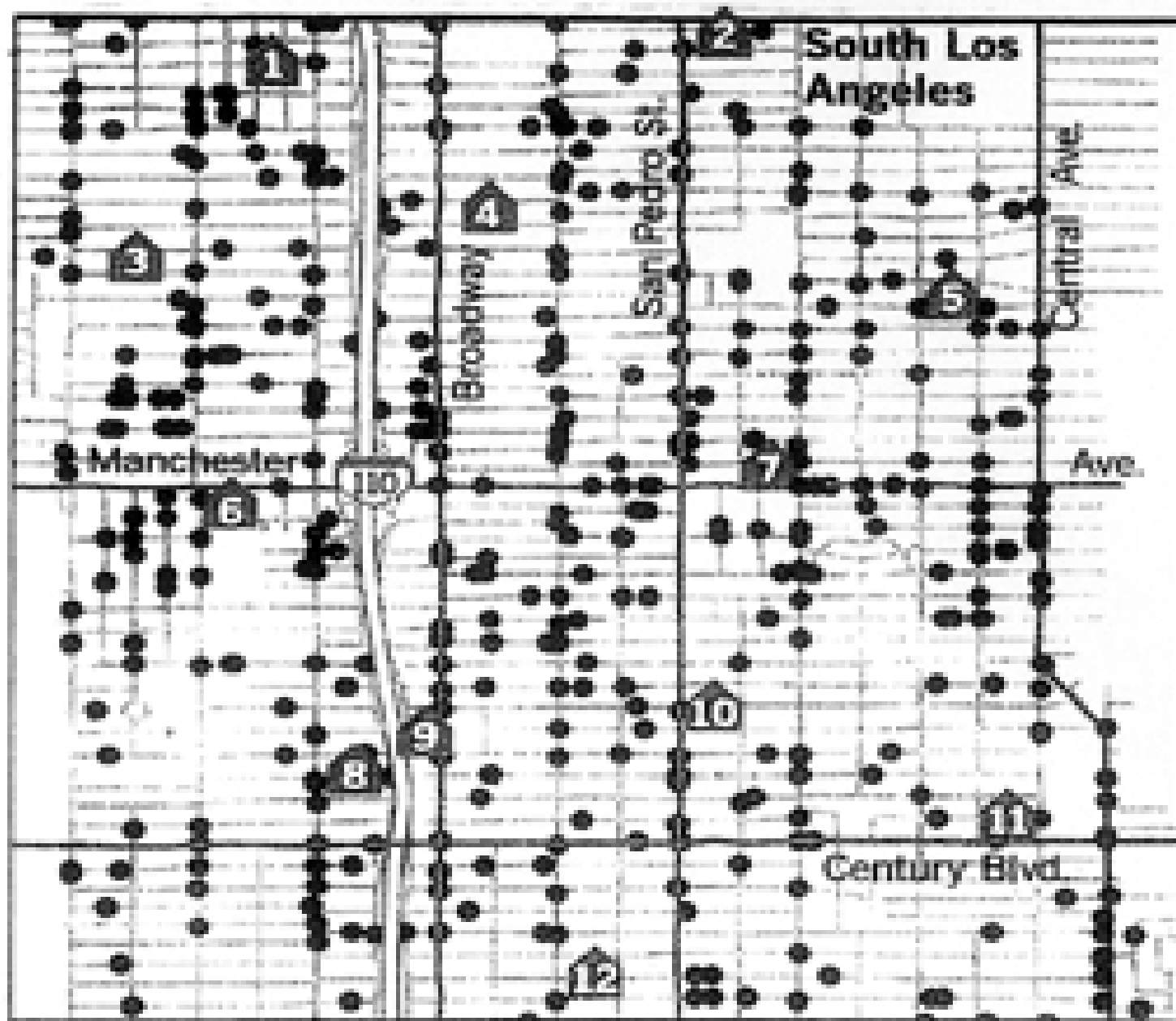
- **Violence exposure (in last year)**
 - 90% report witnessing violence
 - 85% report being threatened with violence
 - 69% report violence victimization
 - 43% report violence involving a knife or gun
- **Symptoms**
 - 27% with PTSD symptoms in clinical range
 - 16% with Depressive symptoms in clinical range

• Unsolved murders



Schools





* Blocks of 0.25 square miles or greater are not shown.

Sources: Los Angeles Police Department, U.S. Census Bureau, Los .

*Which students are at greatest risk
for violence exposure, PTSD and Depression?:
Disparity*

- Ethnic minorities (90% in LAUSD)
- Lower socio-economic status (73% in LAUSD on free or reduced lunch program)
- Older children
- Early conduct problems
- Living in urban areas
- Males - LAUSD Study of 28,500 6th Graders

THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP?

The negative effects of trauma exposure may explain one aspect of the bleak reality that African American and Latino students continue to trail far behind their Caucasian peers in schools, such as higher drop out rates from high school after generations of education “reform”. (Shin, 2005),

Why a Program for Traumatized Students?

One night several years ago, I saw men *shooting* at each other, people running to hide. I was scared and I thought I was going to die. After this happened, I started to have nightmares. I felt scared all the time. I couldn't concentrate in class like before. I had thoughts that something bad could happen to me. I started to get in a lot of fights at school and with my brothers.

Martin, 6th grader

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Martin, 6th grader

3 Broad Categories of Response

These symptoms must be present for

**at least 1 month and must cause significant
distress or impairment in functioning**

- **Reexperiencing**
- **Avoidance/Numbing**
- **Increased Arousal**

3 Broad Categories of PTSD Response

Avoidance/Numbing

- **Avoid thoughts, feelings or conversations about the trauma**
- **Avoid reminders of the trauma**
- **Amnesia for important aspects of the trauma**
- **Diminished interest or participation in normal activities**
- **Feeling detached or estranged from others**
- **Restricted affective (emotional) range**
- **Believing one will not live a normal life span (Belief in a foreshortened future)**

Screening: We Asked the Children Exposure and Trauma Symptoms

- Violence exposure
 - How often over the past year have **you** been hit *at school* or in the community
 - How often over the past year have you seen someone beaten up?
- Trauma symptoms
 - Have you been having nightmares about the event?
 - Have you been avoiding things that remind you of the event?
 - Have you been jumpy or easily startled?

3 Broad Categories of PTSD Response

Increased Arousal

- **Sleep difficulties**
- **Irritability**
- **Angry outbursts**
- **Difficulty concentrating**
- **Hypervigilance**
- **Exaggerated startle response**

How does distress from violence affect students in the classroom?

- **Decline in classroom performance from**
 - **Inability to concentrate**
 - **Flashbacks, preoccupation with trauma**
 - **Avoidance of school and other places**
- **Development of other behavioral and emotional problems**
 - **Substance abuse**
 - **Aggression**
 - **Depression**

What can be done for students exposed to violence?

- **Early detection of violence exposure and associated distress**
- **Teaching students skills to cope better with distress and to learn social problem solving skills**
- **Informing teachers and parents how they can support these students in the classroom and at home**

Characteristic Symptoms of PTSD Children Are More Vulnerable

- **Exposure to violence or a traumatic event is the First Criterion for PTSD**
- **Experiencing or Witnessing event capable of causing death, injury to threat to the physical self or harm to another**
- **Learning about a significant other being exposed to such an event**

Cognitive Behavior Therapy for Trauma in Schools: The CBITS Program

- **10 child group therapy sessions for trauma symptoms**
- **1-3 individual child sessions for exposure to trauma memory and treatment planning**
- **Parent sessions on education about trauma, parenting support**
- **A teacher in-service includes education about detecting and supporting traumatized students in the classroom**

Key Program Components

- **Educating students about trauma and common symptoms**
- **Relaxation training and fear thermometer**
- **Cognitive therapy**
- **Learning to face the trauma**
- **Building skills to get along with others**

CBITS developed for multicultural communities

- **The intervention and screening instruments were developed and modified using focus groups of parents and children**
- **CBITS has been delivered in multiple languages Armenian, Korean, Spanish, Russian for immigrant children**
- **CBITS program is flexible to meet the needs of students and families from diverse backgrounds: Latinos, African Americans, Hmong, Vietnamese, Native Americans**

Grades and classroom behavior improved

- **As trauma symptoms decreased, grades improved**
- **Student attendance improved**
- **Teachers reported fewer classroom learning problems after program**
- **U.S. Department of Education has identified CBITS as a program that meets the standards of NCLB**

PARENTS REPORTED IMPROVEMENT

- **76% of Parents wanted help for other family members**
- **Grades Improved**
- **Home Behavior Improved**
- **Their Relationship with Their Child Improved**

President's New Freedom Commission on Mental Health

- Bringing Science to Services
- Building the knowledge base for the treatment of trauma
- Expanding and enhancing school-based mental health programs

How does violence or trauma exposure impact learning?

- Decreased reading ability (Delaney-Black et al., 2003)**
- Lower grade-point average (Hurt et al., 2001)**
- More days of school absence (Hurt et al., 2001)**
- Decreased rates of high school graduation (Grogger, 1997)**
- Increased expulsions and suspensions (LAUSD Survey)**



develop



trust



What Is Good Mental Health?

**The Ability to Work...
To Love...
To Learn**



**To Have A Full
Meaningful Life
In the Community**

Further reading

Jaycox, L. (2004). Cognitive-Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools. Longmont, CO: Sopris West Educational Services.

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Further reading

Stein, B.D., Jaycox, L.H., Kataoka, S.H., Wong, M., Tu, W., Elliott, M.N. & Fink, A. (2003). A mental health intervention for schoolchildren exposed to violence: A randomized controlled trial. Journal of the American Medical Association, 290(5): 603-11.

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