DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MINN-LINK BRIEF #22

Violent Victimization among Adolescent Youth in Minneapolis

Translating research to practice may be difficult, yet a better understanding of current research is necessary to ensure child welfare workers engage in best practices when working with children and families. The Minn-LInK Discussion Guide is designed to help facilitate thoughtful discussions about the information presented in the research brief in order to inform practice and enhance discussion surrounding meaningful issues.

In this issue, we explored the family contexts, socio-demographic factors, and school disciplinary incidents associated with the violent victimization of adolescents in Minneapolis. In particular, we were interested in understanding the common characteristics and experiences of violently victimized adolescents, whether those characteristics differed from those of their non-violently victimized peers, and how those experiences and characteristics of violently victimized adolescents were interrelated. Overall, findings indicated that adolescents who were the victims of a violent crime differed from their peers in regard to gender, race, homelessness, receipt of special education services, socioeconomic status, Child Protection System involvement, and out-of-home placement experiences. Violently victimized adolescents were more likely to be involved in school disciplinary incidents, and when involved, the majority of adolescents were subjects in more than one incident.

Discussion on Practice Implications

1. This research brief highlighted the fact that certain groups of adolescents may be more vulnerable to victimization. Why is it important to understand the risk factors, common characteristics, and experiences of violently victimized adolescents in your role? How can these indicators be used to focus service delivery by professionals working with youth?

2. Violent victimization is more prevalent among adolescents than any other age group. What community outreach services have you seen or engaged in to reduce violence and/or victimization among adolescents?

3. Research suggests that certain lifestyles and activities, in the absence of adult supervision, may put some adolescents in greater contact with potential offenders, thereby increasing their risk of victimization. This study's findings showed that adolescents who had a history of CPS involvement and those that experienced an out-of-home placement were at an increased risk for violent victimization. What preventative efforts need to take place to protect youth involved in CPS?

Discussion on Agency- & System-Level Changes

1. While significant associations were found between several risk factors and experiencing violent victimization in this study, predicting violent victimization of adolescents is a complex task which requires an understanding of adolescent characteristics and experiences across a number of different settings and domains of functioning. How can multiple systems collaborate in order to prevent the violent victimization of vulnerable groups of youth? What changes to policy, practice, or available resources are needed?

2. This study found that involvement in school disciplinary events precedes violent victimization for the majority of violently-victimized adolescents. How can schools develop early intervention services to reduce the risk of victimization? What is your role in this work? How can school disciplinary incidents be used to better understand the victimization trajectory?

3. What assessment strategies can be used in your work with children and youth to understand their risk of victimization and involvement in violent crimes? How can this information be used for service planning and decision-making? What supports (e.g., policies, resources, etc.) does your agency provide you for this purpose? What barriers remain? What changes may be needed to better address the safety of the children and youth in CPS?