



Child traumatic stress occurs when children and adolescents are exposed to traumatic events or traumatic situations, and when this exposure overwhelms their ability to cope with what they have experienced.

### **What kinds of traumatic events are experienced by children?**

Children are exposed to a wide range of trauma, including physical and sexual abuse, violence in families and communities, natural disasters and terrorism, accidental or violent death of a loved one, refugee and war experiences, and life-threatening injury and illness.

- 1 in 8 children (ages 2-17) have experienced a form of child maltreatment
- 1.8 million adolescents have experienced sexual assault
- 8.8 million have witnessed interpersonal violence
- 67.8% of children (aged 9-16) have experienced at least one traumatic event by age 16
- Over 60% of children (grades 4-12) in NYC public schools had experienced at least one traumatic event *prior to 9-11-2001*
- 65.2% of Head Start children have been exposed to community violence, and 46.7% have experienced child maltreatment or domestic violence

### **What are the Consequences of Child Trauma?**

- Posttraumatic stress and other disorders (depression, anxiety, phobia, panic)
- Health effects
- Poor academic performance; impaired cognitive development: IQ and language
- Impaired social development; decreased capacity to regulate emotion and attention
- Substance use/abuse
- Numbness, desensitization to threat
- Subsequent victimization

*Sources: National Survey of Adolescents, 2000; National Survey of Victimization of Children and Youth, 2005; Copeland et al., 2007; Hoven et al., 2005; Graham-Berman and Seng, 2005.*

# National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative

The National Child Traumatic Stress Initiative (NCTSI) was initially enacted in 2000 as part of the Children's Health Act, creating a unique congressional initiative, the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN), intended to bring about widespread and lasting improvement in the lives of traumatized children and their families across the United States. The NCTSI supports the development and broad adoption of evidence-based and culturally-appropriate interventions to increase the standard of care, and provides a means to transform services through sustained collaboration among Network academic, clinical, and community service centers and family/consumer partners. The NCTSI was reauthorized in 2002 as part of the Public Health Security and Bioterrorism Preparedness and Response Act, and is part of the pending reauthorization of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

**The NCTSI legislation is the most critical federal law related to children and trauma.** Specifically, NCTSI:

- Acknowledges that traumatic events and situations cause great harm to children and families;
- Provides funding for Network centers serving traumatized children and families;
- Develops new trauma resources and treatments; and
- Disseminates trauma-informed and evidenced-base services and training in all child-serving and emergency response settings.

## **NCTSI Funding**

- Although NCTSI was originally authorized at \$50 million, this initiative continues to be underfunded.
- Despite the urgent demands of several national emergencies and the increase in childhood exposure to many forms of trauma, this initiative has not been fully supported to serve as a national resource to address the ongoing stressors of trauma in the daily lives of many children and families, while having full capacity to respond immediately to national emergencies, such as natural disasters, terrorism attacks, school shootings, and others.
- The President's Fiscal Year 2009 budget proposes a \$17.4 million cut to the NCTSI program, essentially cutting the program in half and destroying the collaborative and outreach abilities of the program to continue.

## **APA Recommendations**

**In order to ensure that our nation and all those impacted by child traumatic stress receive the critical resources authorized under NCTSI, APA strongly urges Congress to appropriate full funding for NCTSI at the originally authorized level of \$50 million for Fiscal Year 2009.** This amount would be authorized through the Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education appropriation budget.

