



## **NCCP Reports Many Children Exposed to Trauma; Issues Policy Recommendations**

A report released by the Mailman School's National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), *Strengthening Policies to Support Children, Youth and Families Who Experience Trauma*, draws attention to children and youth who are exposed to trauma and calls for a change in policy to better support these children and their families. Exposure to trauma can range from being bullied in school to being the subject of a violent crime or to loss of a family member serving overseas.

“Trauma is pervasive in this country,” said Dr. Janice Cooper, co-author of the report and NCCP’s Director of Child Health and Mental Health. “One quarter of all children and adolescents are exposed to trauma—and the rates are far higher for the most vulnerable children. Our leaders should be jolted into action.”

The report finds that policymakers lack the urgency befitting the magnitude of the problem and calls for a major overhaul of policies and practices that address trauma exposure for children, youth, and families. Unfortunately, current policies have created a system that is fragmented, difficult to access, and provides inadequate services.

“The adult system deals with adults, the children’s system with children, and families fall through the cracks,” according to Jane Knitzer, EdD, clinical professor of Population and Family Health, director of NCCP, and co-author of the report. “The lack of family-focused funding makes it almost impossible to sustain interventions that address both the needs of children and the needs of adults.”

Among other challenges are the lack of a coherent plan to address the pervasive nature of trauma, funding restrictions that impact care, few efforts to prevent trauma and intervene early, and a workforce that lacks appropriate training.

However, the report finds that viable, effective trauma interventions exist and provide valuable case studies for policymakers. *Strengthening Policies to Support Children, Youth and Families Who Experience Trauma* urges policymakers to:

- Adopt a universal approach to identify and treat children and youth exposed to trauma;
- Adequately fund prevention, early intervention and treatment;
- Require comprehensive health services plans that include how to address trauma across systems and funding streams;

- Eliminate funding barriers that undermine family treatment and hinder prevention and early intervention strategies;
- Launch a major initiative to improve the quality of care delivered to those exposed to trauma that addresses the lack of training, competency and availability of workers who can provide appropriate care.

The report features several case studies on promising practices in trauma-related care, including Watertown, New York, where the dependents of military personnel stationed at Fort Drum receive care through a school-based health center; rural Maine, where a system of care initiative promises to transform service delivery; and a multi-tribal collaborative to address child abuse in North Dakota.