How Are Different Forms of Violence Interrelated?

Why is it important for practitioners to understand the interrelationships between different forms of violence?
Violence happens in every community across the nation, and affects people of all ages. Few individuals and families experience violence as an isolated incident. Often, different forms of violence, such as domestic violence, child abuse, sexual violence, and suicidal behavior, take place concurrently within the same home. For each violent experience that young people go through, their risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of other forms of violence increases. It is important to remember that the majority of people who experience violence do not become offenders themselves. (For example, many children from abusive families do not abuse their adult intimate partners.1) However, the statistics in this fact sheet illustrate that violence can be cyclical in nature. Because violence in the home or community often affects student behavior and performance in school, practitioners should consider the connections between violence inside and outside of the school setting when developing school violence prevention plans. Educated Practitioners Are Better Equipped to Design Comprehensive Violence Prevention Programs- which are more likely to be successful, and Practitioners who understand the interrelatedness of these issues can also then educate and train their peers.

The facts
- A child who is physically or sexually abused by a parent is more likely to become a violent offender, and to commit violent offenses more frequently than one who has not suffered abuse.2
- Young people who are physically abused show lower social effectiveness with peers and higher levels of aggression in the school setting.3
- Research indicates that 70% of maltreated youth studied have engaged in violent delinquency, compared to 56% of youth who were not maltreated. This was true even when other confounding factors had been controlled.4
- Children who have been exposed to domestic violence often exhibit behavioral and mental health problems such as aggression, depression, lower levels of social competence and self-esteem, poor academic performance and problem-solving skills, and low levels of empathy.5
- Children who witness spousal assault and who have also been the victims of parental assault are six times more likely to assault other children outside their family than those who had not witnessed or experienced parental assault.6
- Young males who witness parental domestic violence are at an increased risk for becoming abusive in their adult intimate relationships.7
- Children from violent homes are 24 times more likely to commit sexual assault than their counterparts from non-violent homes.8
- Children from violent homes are six times more likely to commit suicide than children from non-violent homes.9
- Girls who suffer sexual assault experience elevated rates of depression and anxiety and are more likely to attempt suicide.10
- In girls, physical and sexual abuse has been linked to increased aggression, delinquency, destructiveness, and the belief that a violent response is acceptable behavior when hit.11, 12
Children who experience multiple acts or forms of violence appear to be at greater risk of continuing the cycle of violence than those who have not been exposed to violence, including seeking retribution against their elderly parents.13

Additional Resources
The website for the Minnesota Center against Violence and Abuse (MINCAVA) contains information about the overlap of child abuse, domestic violence, and youth violence. More specifically, refer to Janet Carter’s article entitled “Domestic Violence, Child Abuse, and Youth Violence: Strategies for Prevention and Early Intervention” which can be accessed at http://www.mincava.umn.edu/link/fvpf2.htm.

The website for the Family Violence Prevention Fund in San Francisco contains information on the linkages between different forms of violence. http://fvpf.org

The National Funding Collaborative on Violence Prevention in Washington, D.C. is committed to focusing on the linkages between different forms of violence. http://www.peacebeyondviolence.org

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