



Measurement and Implementation Considerations for Collecting Data on Trauma in Children

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Topics

- ▶ Scope of potentially traumatic events, outcomes, mediators, and moderators to be measured with children
- ▶ Screening, case detection, and case classification challenges with children
- ▶ Ethical and legal issues with children

What PTEs to Assess?

War Zone
Trauma
Animal
Attacks

Sexual
Assault

MVA
Community
Violence

Bullying

Traumatic
Death

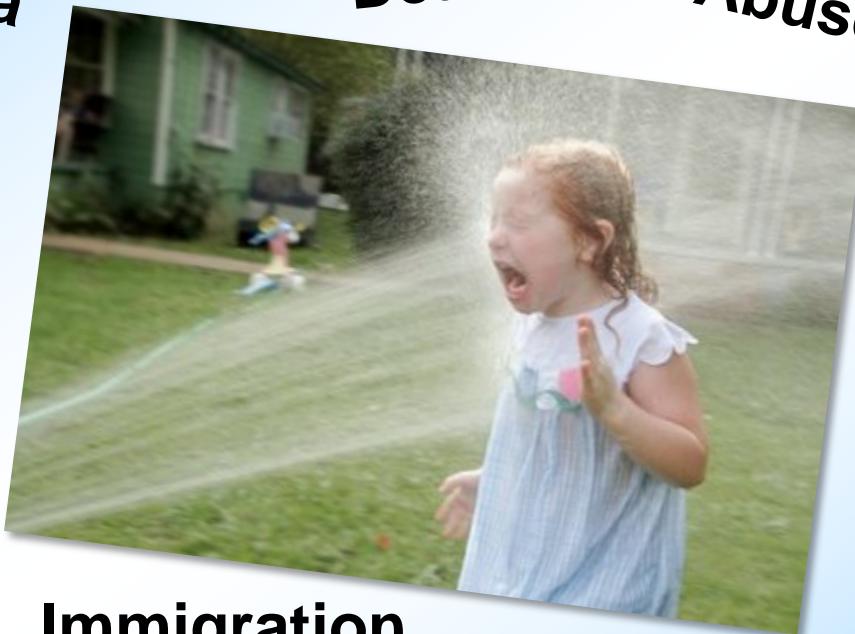
Physical
Abuse

Terrorist Acts

Natural
Disasters

Drug/Alcohol
Rape

Mass
Shootings



Immigration
Trauma

Man-made
Disasters

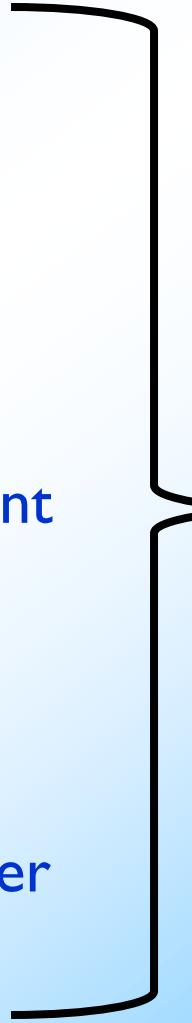
Physical
Assault

Incident/Event
Characteristics

- Actual
- Perceived

What Incident Characteristics to Assess?

- ▶ Series vs. a single incident
- ▶ Duration of the series
- ▶ Frequency of the series
- ▶ Sexual penetration
- ▶ Fear activation during the event
- ▶ Fear of physical injury during the event
- ▶ Fear of death during the event
- ▶ Significant pain
- ▶ Physical injury, even minor injury.
- ▶ Emotionally close and trusted offender
- ▶ Response of adults

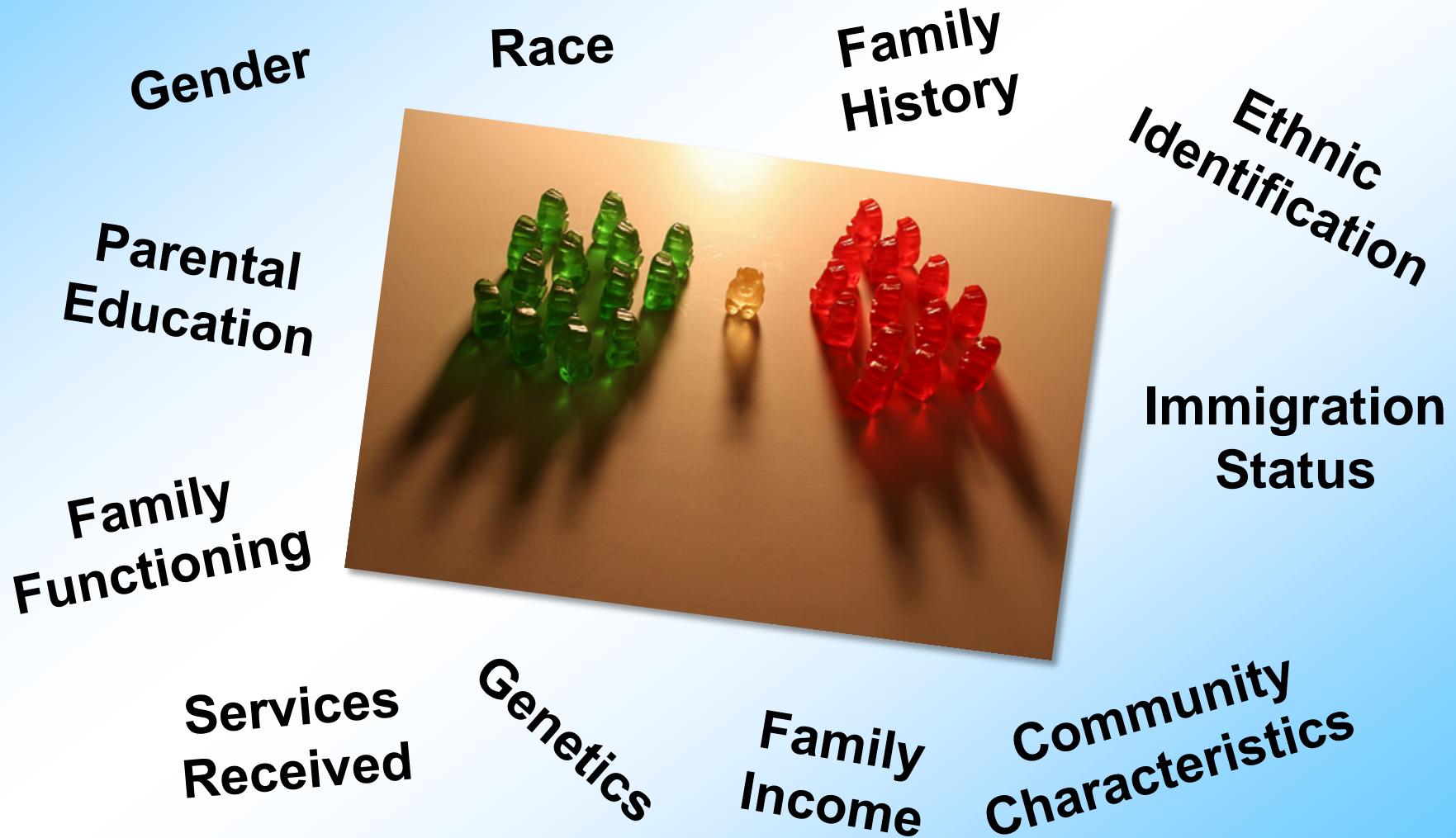


PTSD

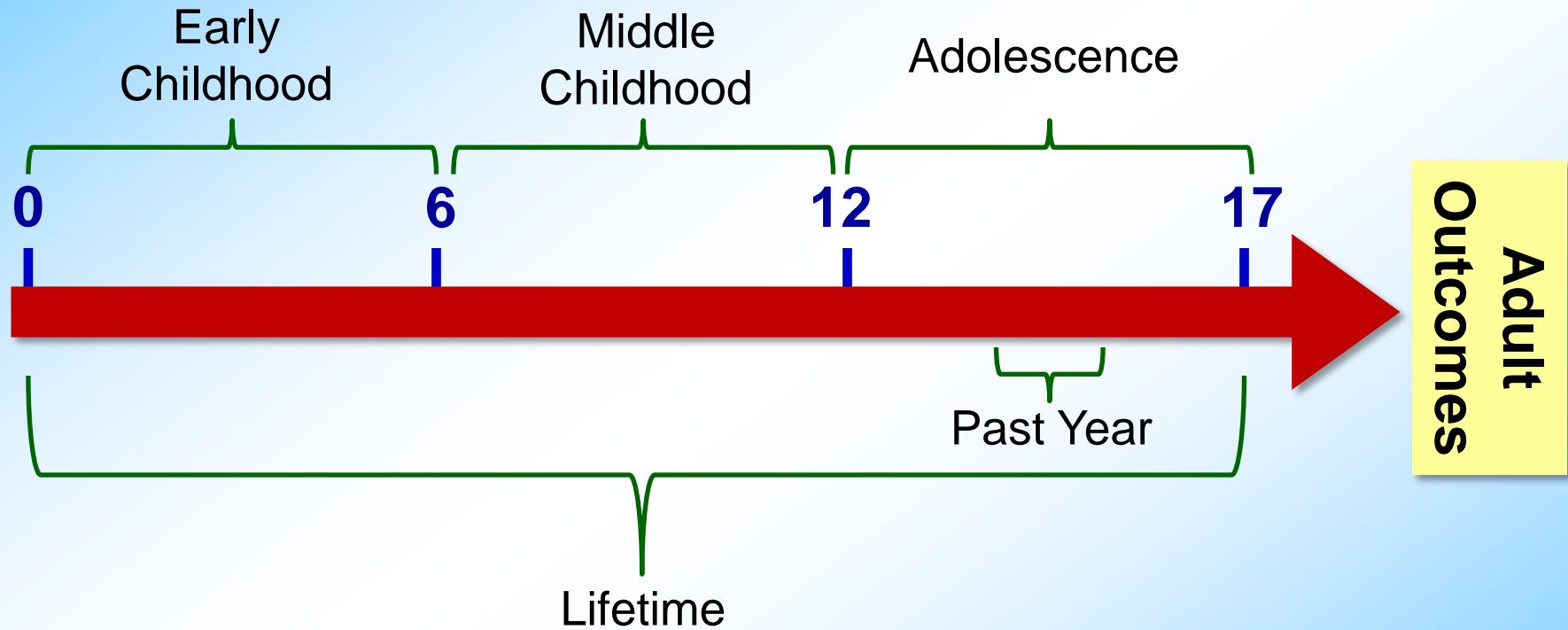
What Trauma-Related Problems to Assess?



Mediators, Moderators?



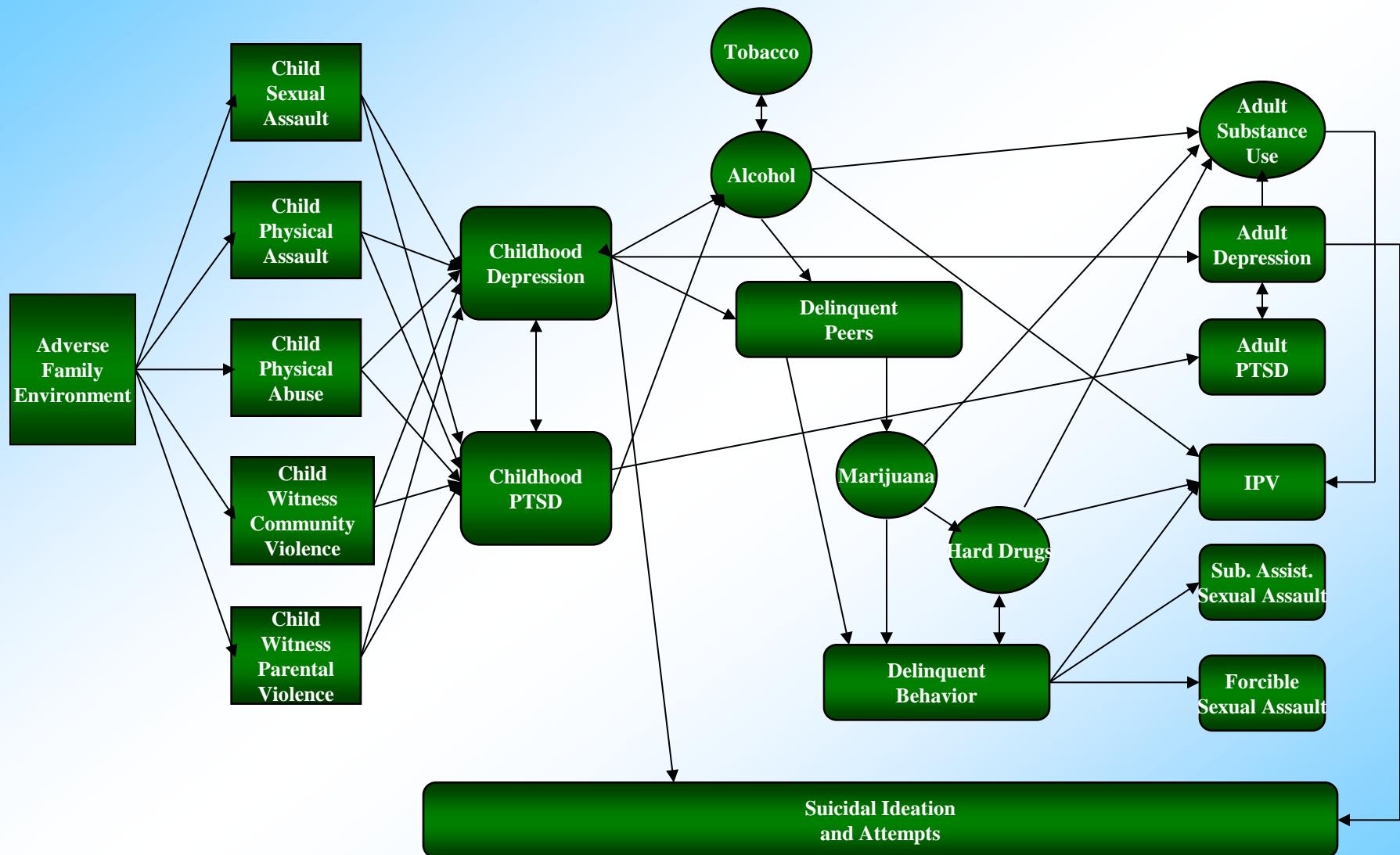
Time Period of Interest?



Incidence?
Prevalence?

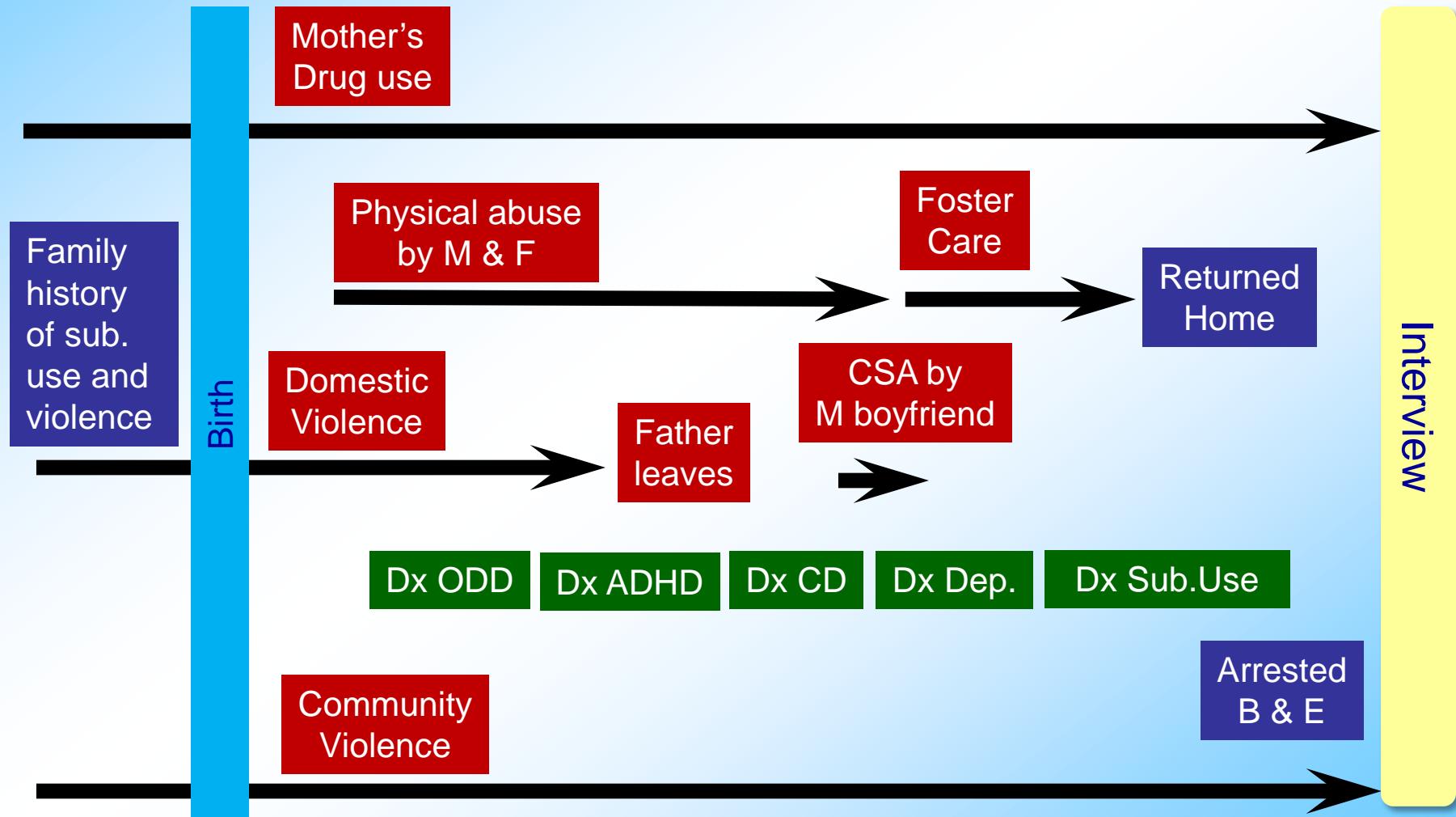
Sources of
Information?

NSA -- Model of Childhood Victimization and Adult Outcomes



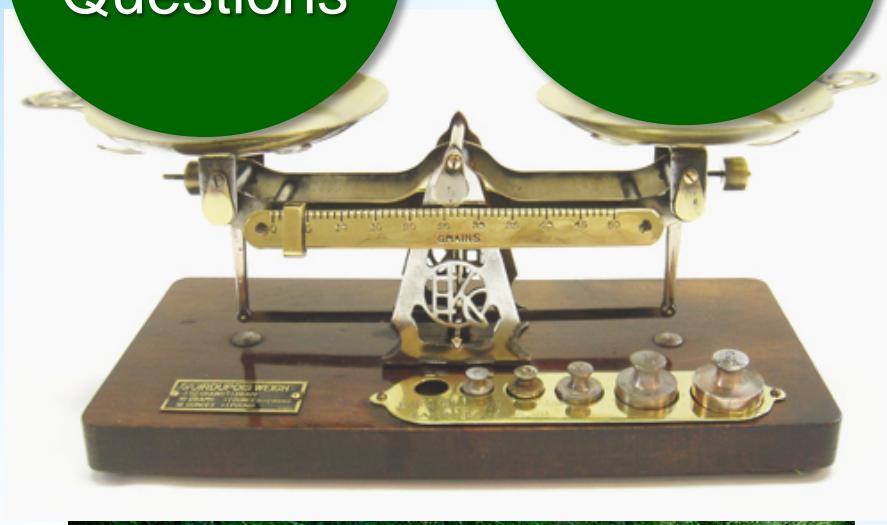
Moderators: Gender, Race, Family Income

Polyvictimization and Comorbidity Respondent Timeline



Research
Questions

Feasibility



Screening for Trauma History



- **Case detection**
- **Accurate classification**
False negative?
False positive?

Case Detection

- ▶ **Definition.** Clear conceptual and operational definitions of the PTEs of interest.
- ▶ **Introduction.** Brief paragraph prior to screening questions to set the cognitive context, dispel stereotypes, adjust for common schemas concerning the trauma type, and cue memory.
- ▶ **Screening questions**
 - Multiple questions covering the range of experiences within type
 - Behaviorally specific to reduce interpretation
 - Language level consistent with the target age group
 - Should cue retrievable memories of past events
 - Match respondent's interpretation and labeling of experiences
- ▶ **Incident characteristics.** Follow-up questions for “hits” on screening questions to assess relevant PTE characteristics.

Interview Progression

- ▶ Sections should build on each other
 - Easy, Sensitive, Easy, Debrief
- ▶ Balance similar and different structures and response sets across interview sections. Inspire attention, not confusion.
- ▶ Terms should remain the same across sections
- ▶ Length related to age



Common Errors in Screening

- ▶ Not asking questions
- ▶ “Gate” questions
- ▶ Single screening items
- ▶ Undefined terms that are open to significant interpretation by respondents
 - physically abused, sexually abused, fondled, bullied, raped, molested, attempted, domestic violence.
- ▶ Double (or more) barreled questions
- ▶ Lengthy or overly wordy questions
- ▶ Asking follow-up questions after each screening hit



Sexual Assault Screening Questions

1. *Has a man or boy ever put his private sexual part inside your private part, rear end or inside your mouth when you didn't want him to?*
2. *Has anyone, male or female, ever put fingers or objects inside your private sexual part or inside your rear end when you didn't want them to?*
3. *Has anyone, male or female, ever put their mouth on your private sexual parts when you didn't want them to?*
4. *Has anyone, male or female, ever touched your private sexual parts when you didn't want them to?*
5. *Has anyone, male or female, ever made you touch their private sexual parts when you didn't want to?*
6. (Boys only) *Has a woman or girl ever made you put your private sexual part in her mouth or inside her body when you didn't want to?*

Factors Affecting Case Detection

- ▶ Level of perceived confidentiality offered
 - Concerns of getting self or others in trouble, fear of retribution
- ▶ Context of the screening setting
 - Location of respondent (home, school, other)
 - Method (in-person, group, telephone, paper, computer)
 - Who is present? (interviewer, parents, teacher, peers, siblings)
- ▶ Recall of events by respondents
 - Experiences not recalled, forgotten, and not accessible
 - Experiences partially forgotten, but retrievable with the right cuing
 - Remembered experiences, but are not defined by the respondent in the same way as the screening question is worded
 - Remembered experiences that are willfully withheld
- ▶ Willful nondisclosure

Reasons For Willful Nondisclosure

- ▶ Sense of stigma, shame, guilt, self-blame
- ▶ Threats or instructions by a parents
- ▶ Fear of punishment, “getting into trouble”
- ▶ Fear of consequences to family and family members
- ▶ Cultural and familial beliefs about privacy
- ▶ Psychological distress about events
- ▶ Fear of retribution by assailant
- ▶ History of negative outcomes from prior disclosures
(disclosure inoculation)



Common Ethical Questions in Child Trauma Research

- ▶ Are questions about traumatic events overly distressing to children or adolescents?
- ▶ Do parents get overly upset when they learn about the questions you are asking their children?
- ▶ Does asking these questions place some children at risk from their parents?
- ▶ Legal implications

Confidentiality and Mandatory Reporting

- ▶ Confidentiality parameters presumed by research participant, child or adult.
- ▶ Confidentiality parameters agreed to in the informed consent process.
 - Disclosure of situations leading to a break in confidentiality?
 - Disclosure of procedures for determining these situations?
 - Disclosure of mandated reporting situations?
 - Disclosure of child in danger situations (suicide, harm from others)?
- ▶ Child in Danger Protocol

Questions?

