



New Research Shows Child Victims Keep Getting Victimized

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Once a child has become a victim of a crime or a peer assault, he or she stays at high risk to be re-victimized, according to a new national study conducted by researchers at the University of New Hampshire. The findings suggest that not enough is being done to help protect children in the wake of victimizations.

The results of the study appear in the May 2007 issue of the journal *Child Abuse and Neglect* in the article "Re-victimization patterns in a national longitudinal sample of children and youth."

UNH researchers followed a nationally representative sample of nearly 1,500 children ages 2 to 17 for two years. More than half the kids who had a crime or physical assault committed against them in the first year suffered another such attack in the next.

The sexually victimized children were the ones at highest risk for a repeat victimization, having nearly seven times the vulnerability in the second year compared to kids who had not been sexually victimized earlier, according to the researchers.

"One of the things that also surprised us was that crimes of one sort greatly increased the risk of crimes of another sort as well. If you experienced a property crime in the first year you were four times more likely to experience a sexual offense in the second year," said David Finkelhor, director of the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center and lead author of the study.

Children's likelihood to experience a continuing high level of victimization from one year to the next was increased if they had other adversities in their lives such as natural disasters, illnesses or accidents.

Some children, however, managed to escape from conditions of high victimization after a one-year period of vulnerability. The feature that most identified this group of children was having more good friends, the researchers found.

"We are not doing enough to identify and help protect kids who get victimized," Finkelhor said. "We need to be making safer schools and families for these vulnerable kids." He pointed to the finding about good friends to suggest that more might be done to help build protective peer networks around kids who seem to be at risk.

