

# CHANGING MINDS

## National Public Awareness Campaign

OCTOBER 2016

A 2011 study funded by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) concluded that a majority of children in the United States have been exposed to violence, crime, or abuse in their homes, schools, and communities. The consequences of this problem are significant and widespread. Children's exposure to violence, whether as victims or witnesses, is often associated with long-term physical, psychological, and emotional harm.

### Changing Minds Public Awareness Campaign

DOJ announced in October 2016 the launch of the first national campaign to raise awareness, teach skills, and inspire public action to address children's exposure to violence and trauma. Established through DOJ's Defending Childhood Initiative, the national education campaign features digital and print content intended to reach adults who interact with children and youth in grades K–12. This multiyear campaign will engage teachers, coaches, counselors, doctors, nurses, law enforcement officers, and other frontline professionals and caregivers on proven ways to help heal the damage of childhood trauma.

The campaign aims to:

- Raise awareness about the prevalence, urgency, and impact of children's exposure to violence and the trauma that may result.
- Change perceptions of adults who interact with children from viewing them as "angry, bad, withdrawn" to recognizing that they are children who "have been hurt and need our help."
- Motivate adults who interact with children in schools, communities, and health settings to be caring, concerned, and supportive figures in the lives of our children.
- Engage and change practices in schools, homes, and communities.

The campaign's website, [ChangingMindsNOW.org](http://ChangingMindsNOW.org), includes two original videos depicting the stories of adults who were exposed as children to violence in their homes and neighborhoods; the five everyday gestures that adults can use to make a difference in a child's life; an informational video that explores the impact of violence on children's brain development; and a toolkit for schools, communities, and practitioners in various fields.

More ►

### FACTS

Research shows that:<sup>1,2</sup>

- About 58 percent of children and youth experienced at least one exposure to five aggregate types of violence in the previous year (physical assault, sexual victimization, maltreatment, property victimization, and witnessing violence).
- Nearly 1 in 12 children have seen a family member assault another.
- Multiple exposures to violence among children and youth are common, with nearly one-half reporting more than one type of direct or witnessed victimization in the previous year.
- Almost 1 in 6 reported 6 or more types of direct or witnessed victimization, and 1 in 20 reported 10 or more types of direct or witnessed victimization over the same period.
- Exposure can seriously harm the development of a child's brain and body and lead to a number of long-lasting negative outcomes.
- One of the biggest predictors of a child's ability to be resilient in the face of trauma is having loving and caring adults in his or her life.

<sup>1</sup> Finkelhor, David; Heather Turner, Ann Shattuck, Sherry Hamby, and Kristen Kracke. (2015). Children's Exposure to Violence, Crime, and Abuse: An Update. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved from: [www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/248547.pdf](http://www.ojjdp.gov/pubs/248547.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> The Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence. (2012). Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence. Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Retrieved from: [www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf](http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/cev-rpt-full.pdf).

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## Background

In its final report to former Attorney General Eric Holder in December 2012, the National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence recommended that “federal, state, and regional initiatives should be designed, developed, and implemented to launch a national public awareness campaign to create fundamental changes in perspective in every organization, community, and household in our country.” In response, DOJ developed the Changing Minds public awareness campaign in collaboration with Futures Without Violence (Futures), a national health and social justice nonprofit organization; the Ad Council; and Wunderman advertising agency who developed the campaign *pro bono*. DOJ’s Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is spearheading the campaign.

DOJ and Futures have partnered on this issue since DOJ released the compelling findings of the first National Survey of Children’s Exposure to Violence in 2009. In 2010, DOJ launched the national Defending Childhood Initiative, created to prevent children’s exposure to violence as victims and witnesses, mitigate its impact, and develop knowledge about and increase awareness of this issue. Futures has provided training and technical assistance to the eight demonstration sites of the Defending Childhood Initiative and developed the Changing Minds curriculum to equip educators to create learning environments that are welcoming to and healing for children who have been exposed to violence.

Childhood trauma  
**Changing minds.**<sup>™</sup>