

Associations between Exposure to the Community Life Course Development Model and Childhood Abuse

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Background: According to the Life Course Development Model (LCDM), the community environment—biologic, physical, and social—strongly affects an individual’s capacity to be healthy. Building on the fundamental concept that community and environment have a big impact over time on health, the Washington State Family Policy Council partnered with Community Networks to build community capacity, aimed at creating environments for residents that reduce rates of adverse childhood experiences and childhood violence.

Objectives: To describe and examine correlated reported experience of abuse among youth in 10th and 12th grades in Washington State, and to compare the prevalence of reported experiences of abuse in counties with Community Networks that did and did not adopt the LCDM of community capacity building.

Method: Cross-sectional cohort study using data collected for the Washington State 2010 Healthy Youth Survey, Form B and NS. A total of 5,347 10th and 12th grade students from 13 counties were included in the study. Counties following the LCDM include (all rank as high capacity): Adams, Okanogan, San Juan, Wahkiakum, Walla Walla and Whatcom. Counties not following the LCDM include: Clallam, Clark, Grays Harbor, Mason, Pacific, Snohomish, and Spokane.

Results: After adjustment for effect modifiers of grade and sex, we found a statistically significant reduction in 12th grade females experience of abuse for those living in a LCDM county (OR 0.45, 95% CI 0.25, 0.80). Additionally, there was a significant protective effect of living in a LCDM county for 12th grade males from threats of abuse from their dating partner (OR 0.6, 95% CI 0.37, 0.96).

Conclusion: Our findings highlight a protective effect from abuse by living in a LCDM county, especially for 12th grade adolescents. Community capacity building following the Life Course Development Model has a significant association with reduced rates of adolescents abuse experiences.

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