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Stop It Now! NEWS

The Campaign to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse



Communities Take Responsibility

Helping Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems

by Sarita Hudson, Director of Field Development, Stop It Now!

Forty-three percent of sexual assaults against children ages six and under are attributable to juveniles (National Center for Juvenile Justice, 1999). In addition, a public opinion survey in 2003 by Stop It Now! Minnesota found that adults are most confused about sexual behaviors between children and youth. If adults are unclear about what is sexually healthy or developmentally appropriate between children and youth, they will be unable to recognize and take action to prevent abuse. A necessary part, then, of the public health prevention of child sexual abuse must be to educate adult caregivers and professionals who work with children and youth about what is healthy sexual development as well as what is inappropriate or abusive. Here's a sampling of how Stop It Now! helps communities tackle this important part of keeping children safe.

The Stop It Now! sites in Georgia, Minnesota, and Philadelphia see educating adults about both healthy and at-risk sexual behaviors of children and youth as an integral part of their public health campaign. As Sally Thigpen, Statewide Coordinator of Stop It Now! Georgia remarks, "As a prevention organization it just makes good sense to look at formative behaviors in children, inform parents, families and communities about these behaviors (from healthy to "uh-oh"), and offer options to families that include family response, community response, and systemic response."

In each of the Stop It Now! sites, collaborations with key organizations have

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(Above) Sally Thigpen, Statewide Coordinator of Stop It Now! Georgia, presents research data to colleagues.



▪ SITE NEWS

▪ GEORGIA

Statewide expansion of the Georgia program began on October 1st and expects to establish 7 regional clusters by October 2006. In her role as the new Program Specialist, Anna Curtis will provide local program clusters with initial orientation and training as well as ongoing technical assistance. Anna brings incredible experience and expertise from her previous work as the Advocacy Manager for the DeKalb County CASA program. Stop It Now! Georgia is very excited to welcome Anna and for the opportunity to build a statewide presence of primary prevention of child sexual abuse.

▪ MINNESOTA

Stop It Now! Minnesota recently completed an extensive research project to better understand the behaviors of adults at risk to abuse children. The study investigated what makes it harder or easier to voluntarily come forward, seek treatment, be accountable, and abstain from future abuse. This research was used to develop an advertising campaign directed specifically to the target audience as well as to make program adjustments, including revising web site content. The print and radio ad campaign launched in early November. To learn more about the research or to see the ads, visit Minnesota's web site at www.stopitnow.org/mn.

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Many Paths to Prevention

by Peter Pollard, Director of Public Education, Stop It Now!

Oprah Winfrey's campaign to round up fugitive sex offenders deserves kudos for the quick arrest of two of the FBI's most wanted child sexual abusers. Holding abusers accountable for the damage they inflict is crucial to the healing of their victims. But by focusing on the heart-wrenching stories of six young girls who were kidnapped and murdered by strangers, Oprah Winfrey may unintentionally distract from the fact that most child sexual abuse is committed by someone the victim knows, and often loves.

Behind the focus on stranger assault is a sobering and much more challenging reality. Of the estimated 500,000 children who are sexually assaulted each year, 90 percent of them already know their abuser. Eighty-eight percent never report the abuse to authorities. As many as half the incidents of sexual abuse are committed by children against other, less powerful children.

News reports of the horrible experiences of Amber Hagerman, Carlie Brucia, Jessica Lunsford, Megan Kanka, Polly Klass, and Samantha Runnion have shaped the belief that kids are safer when they are taught to watch out for dangerous, lurking strangers just out of sight. These crimes have inspired a spate of laws increasing sentences and expanding community notification about shadowy convicted sex offenders living in our neighborhoods. Being aware of who's in our children's environments certainly is an important part of sex-abuse prevention. But much more often, the challenge lies even closer to home.

Ignorance, coupled with fear of an uncomfortable conversation with someone we care about, puts children at risk. Adults must learn the signs that suggest a child may be vulnerable and muster the courage to challenge not just strangers, but people they love, or even themselves. Ironically, like most adults who sexually abuse children, both of the men arrested from Winfrey's list were known and trusted by their victims. They weren't strangers. For the vast majority of child victims, the signs that abuse has occurred are far less obvious than they were in the

dramatic cases of Amber, Carlie, Jessica, Megan, Polly, and Samantha. Most victims of sexual abuse remain quietly living in their homes, often with their abusers. They want the abuse to stop. But left only with a choice between silence or a total family disruption, victims, and even others who suspect abuse, usually choose silence.

No one in society is free of the burden of prevention. Each and every person needs the courage to confront the complicated emotions that lead to silence. Adults must use the love and trust they feel for a relative, friend, teacher, coach, or member of the clergy to reach out and help that person who may be abusing or at risk to abuse.

With knowledge, comes hope. Contrary to popular belief, treatment can be very effective for many people who abuse. The earlier the intervention, the more likely there will be a positive outcome. When abusers are supported to hold themselves accountable for the rest of their lives by a firm but respectful community, sexual abuse can be stopped.

So we should join Oprah Winfrey in preventing sexual abuse "with every breath." But we've already failed if a child's been harmed. Sexual abuse is not inevitable. It's preventable. The effort has to start at home. ■

*The effort
has to start
at home.*





A Message from Maxine Stein, CEO

The news has been filled lately with prominent individuals coming forward to disclose personal incidences childhood abuse. There are additional news stories regularly about communities responding in a variety of ways—some by banning any registered sex offender from their neighborhoods and towns, and others by creating educational and advocacy programs in an effort to help people begin to talk about one of the most difficult subjects there is.

When it comes to the sexual abuse of children, silence isn't golden.

Much of Stop It Now!'s work for the past 13 years has been about helping adults break their silence. Our national Helpline, established in 1995, invites adults to call and talk about behavior they are concerned about in themselves or others. Our Dialogue Project brings together adult survivors of child sexual abuse, family members who were witness to abuse, and recovering abusers into one forum, speaking together publicly about their experiences. Our educational brochures and pamphlets coach adults in choosing the right times and the right words when garnering their courage to speak up.

Stop It Now! has not been silent. Our supporters have not been silent. Together, we are building a movement of innovative prevention programs and policies that hold adults responsible for the safety of children and

provide hope and practical tools to everyone affected by child sexual abuse. We want to create a social climate that supports talking about child sexual abuse and how we can and will stop it in our society.

Stop It Now! needs your support. Securing funding for our prevention work is challenging. Our national organization receives no government funding. We rely on private donors like you to maintain our innovative work. Please give generously to help us expand our reach. In the coming year, we want to launch more extensive social marketing campaigns, revamp our website (1.5 million hits over the past year—we need to touch those people

in the most highly effective way possible), and involve more communities with our messages.

Your support can help us continue to provide hope and help to everyone affected by child abuse. You can help us bring resource materials and training to thousands of people—from survivors and adult bystanders to professionals, people at risk to abuse, and abusers themselves.

We believe that adults can and will step forward. When adults take responsibility and initiative, we can act before a child is harmed. Silence isn't golden. We invite you to join us in our campaign. If you have been a supporter in the past, thank you. Please continue your part in this important work.

Child sexual abuse is not inevitable—it's preventable. ■

When it comes to the sexual abuse of children, silence isn't golden.

HELPING YOUTH CONTINUED FROM PAGE FIVE

program—specifically targeting messages to adults and communities regarding primary prevention of the perpetration of child sexual abuse."

For the Philadelphia and Minnesota sites, who are sponsored by organizations that provide treatment to people with sexual behavior problems, the prevention programs work in synergy with their treatment of children, adolescents, and families. Yvonne Cournoyer, Program Director of Stop It Now! Minnesota notes:

"We are able to use the work that Project Pathfinder does in the adolescent program to really illustrate the need for strong prevention efforts." Michael Stinson, Program Director for Stop It Now! Philadelphia reports that "These programs enhance the holistic offering of the Joseph J Peters Institute by providing alternative universal and selected intervention programs to the indicated tertiary therapy already provided by JJPI." ■



PROGRAM NEWS

New Site, New Affiliates

Stop It Now! Australia, a collaboration with Phoenix House in Bundaberg, Queensland, is the newest site in the Stop It Now! international network. Coordinator Kathy Prentice originally became interested in Stop It Now! through a contact in the United Kingdom. She connected with Stop It Now! in the US and trained with Stop It Now! Minnesota in 2002. Phoenix House, the sponsoring organization, provides comprehensive, integrated services for a variety of populations including adult and child survivors of sexual assault, children with sexualized or sexually abusive behaviors, and adult males who want to address abusive behaviors. The first steps of the new program will be building a Stop It Now! Australia steering committee and website.

Stateside, two new Helpline Affiliates are now operating. Helpline Affiliates offer a way for collaboration on the Stop It Now! Helpline by providing local sponsorship and resources to the national Helpline. Local steering committees develop guidelines for responding to local callers and collect information on local resources so that national staff can respond more fully to those callers.

In June, the Massachusetts Helpline launched in partnership with the Massachusetts Coalition for Sex Offender Management (MCSOM). MCSOM is a public-private partnership of criminal justice, victim advocacy, child protection, treatment, prosecution, and prevention agencies. The Stop It Now! Helpline in Massachusetts complements the crucial work of existing Massachusetts hotlines, agencies, and programs.

In October, the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) Center for Injury and Violence Prevention launched its collaboration with Stop It Now!. VDH is marking the launch with a new marketing campaign including radio, billboard, and bus transit ads in the Richmond area. The Virginia initiative is in response to the 2001 Virginia Sexual Violence State Plan. Since the development of the plan, a group of professionals involved in sexual abuse prevention, prosecution, treatment, supervision, victim advocacy, and child protection formed a steering committee to provide guidance to VDH. The steering committee recommended a Stop It Now! Helpline in Virginia and assisted in the implementation process. To see their ads, go to www.vahealth.org/civp/sexualviolence. ■



Maxine Stein in the UK with the staff of Stop It Now! Surrey.

SITE NEWS

PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia site is planning focus groups on the topic of gender bias as it relates to child sexual abuse. The objective is to better understand how men and women conceptualize the affect of sexual abuse on children. Included will be qualitative data collection on attitudes and beliefs about sexuality, acceptable forms of sexual expression, the magnitude and residual effects of sexual violence on children, and the social construction of relationships between men, women and children. This research expects to use a deeper understanding of gender to create more effective community-based safety programs.

UNITED KINGDOM AND IRELAND

Maxine Stein, CEO of Stop It Now!, visited the Stop It Now! UK program this summer. She had an opportunity to speak with the Chief of Police in Surrey, the largest of the UK sites, and reported an outstanding relationship between Now! and law enforcement. She met with Tink Palmer, Coordinator of the Now! UK and Ireland project. One of the highlights of the UK work is focusing on Internet child pornography. In addition, they have a program called Leisurewatch which trains adults working in public places where children congregate about how to watch for behaviors between adults and children that could indicate risk.

Helping Youth with Sexual Behavior Problems

CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE

provided training to a variety of professionals who work with children. The City of Philadelphia contracts with Stop It Now! Philadelphia to train city service providers who are either case managers or social workers. Stop It Now! Georgia is developing a training curriculum that will be piloted with juvenile justice workers next year.

Stop It Now! Minnesota has partnered with the Minnesota Child Care Resource and Referral Network and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to respond to an increase in sexual abuse cases in child care settings. As part of this collaboration, in the fall of 2004 Now!'s Outreach and Education Coordinator Ann Lindstrom developed a training that is now regularly delivered to childcare professionals throughout the state. The workshop, "How Understanding and Responding to Children's Sexual Behaviors Can Help Prevent Child Sexual Abuse," highlights developmentally expected sexual behaviors in children and adolescents and coaches participants on how responding to these behaviors can be a powerful tool in preventing the sexual abuse of a child. These are just a sample of the efforts that Stop It Now! sites are undertaking with professionals who work with children.

Parents are also a key target audience for Now! educational efforts. As part of their participation in the Prevent Institute, staff from the Georgia, Minnesota, and the Stop It Now! national office are working to develop guidelines on perpetration prevention for parenting programs. The Philadelphia site program is also independently developing parenting curricula. Projected outcomes are likely to be three individual programs: 1) Parenting Sexually Reactive Children, 2) Grand Parenting and Foster Parenting Sexually Reactive Children, and 3) When Children Have Their Own Children: a Primer for Potentially Sexually Abusive Behavior.

Site policy and research work also includes a focus on youth with sexual behavior problems. Stop It Now! Georgia has held focus groups with parents of youth in treatment for sexual offenses and will incorporate this data in efforts to influence policy at both the organizational (systems) and state levels.

Lastly, each site works with their sponsoring organizations for wider incorporation of their prevention messages. Sally observes that "PCA Georgia has chosen to concentrate its CSA prevention resources in the Stop It Now! Georgia

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STOP IT NOW! SITES

Stop It Now! Georgia

Prevent Child Abuse Georgia
1720 Peachtree St. NW, Suite 600
Atlanta, GA 30309
404-870-7363

Stop It Now! Massachusetts Helpline

Massachusetts Coalition for Sex
Offender Management
www.mcsom.com

Stop It Now! Minnesota

Project Pathfinder, Inc.
1821 University Avenue, West
Suite N385
St. Paul, MN 55104
651-644-8515

Stop It Now! Philadelphia

Joseph J. Peters Institute
100 South Broad St., Suite 1700
Philadelphia, PA 19110
215-701-1570

Stop It Now! UK & Ireland

The Lucy Faithfull Foundation
PO Box 9841
Birmingham B487WB
England
1-67- 746 0168

Stop It Now! Virginia Helpline

Virginia Department of Health
Center for Injury & Violence Prevention
109 Governor St., 8th Floor
Richmond, VA 23219-3623
804-864-7740

Stop It Now! created a groundbreaking public health approach to prevent the perpetration of child sexual abuse. Its public policy, public education and research programs have protected our children by emphasizing adult and community responsibility. These programs reach out to adults who are concerned about inappropriate sexualized behavior in another adult, adolescent, or child, and to adults who are concerned about their own thoughts and behaviors.

HELPLINE: 1-888-PREVENT www.stopitnow.org

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Research on Women*

David Prescott

Sand Ridge Secure Treatment Center

Mark Rosenberg, MD

*The Task Force for Child Survival
and Development*

Linda Spears

Child Welfare League of America

Victor Veith

*National Center for Prosecution of
Child Abuse*

* Organizations listed for
identification purposes



In the Public Eye

Now!'s prevention model got a strong vote of confidence at this year's annual conference of the Association for The Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA). The conference theme, "Battling Sexual Abuse with Prevention and Treatment," provided an opportunity for Now! staff to make both pre-conference and breakout presentations.

Sarita Hudson, Peter Pollard, and Deborah Donovan Rice from the Now! national office led a half-day, pre-conference seminar titled "Expanding the Role of Clinicians in Preventing Child Sexual Abuse." They were joined by experts **Reshma Mahendra** of the Centers for Disease Control, **Ted Glackman** of the Joseph J. Peters Institute in Philadelphia, **Steve Sawyer** of Project Pathfinder, and **Patrick Liddle** from the Center for the Treatment of Problem Sexual Behavior in Connecticut.

Later in the week, **Sally Thigpen** of Stop It Now! Georgia, **Bridget Reilly** of Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, **Ted Glackman**, and **Sarita Hudson** offered a presentation titled "Primary Prevention." They presented three papers which detailed primary prevention models in various communities.

Now! was repeatedly acknowledged for its groundbreaking work by both plenary speakers and presenters in various breakout sessions throughout the four days of the conference.

STOP IT NOW! NEWS

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