This report was funded by the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, a non-profit dedicated to enriching the lives of people in Western Massachusetts. We are grateful for their support of primary child sexual abuse prevention training. We would also like to thank all of the participants who participated in and supported the Circles of Safety program during this study. Without your participation, this study would not have been possible.

### Introduction

Despite the difficulty and sensitivity of researching the prevalence of child sexual abuse (CSA), long-term research shows that in the U.S., **CSA is experienced by at least one out of four girls and one out of six boys by their 18th birthday** (APA, 2014)

*Circles of Safety* is a layered training and educational primary program, utilizing a community responsibility model that teaches adults as bystanders how to intervene safely and effectively when they see early warning signs of an adult or youth behaving inappropriately with a child.

**Goals:** Seek to enhance the likelihood that an adult will take action to prevent the sexual abuse of children through the following:
- Increasing awareness and knowledge of child sexual abuse,
- Increasing ability to recognize warning signs in people and environments,
- Increasing skills to design safety plans, and
- Increasing comfort and confidence in ability to speak up.

**Support:** The program is supported by Stop It Now! a non-profit dedicated to the prevention of child sexual abuse and Klingberg Family Centers, a multi-disciplinary and licensed child placing agency.

### Implementation

*Circles of Safety* was administered to 3 departments in one community multi-service organization in Western Massachusetts in the spring of 2018.

- 2 Circles of Safety Trainings
- 1 Supervisor Training
- 1 Training Video

### Methods

To measure program impact, pre and post staff surveys were designed to measure changes to the knowledge and awareness of CSA issues, prevention skills, perceived changes to CSA prevention, changes in attitudes, as well as gather participant perceptions of the training program.

A needs assessment, including staff surveys and focus groups, was completed at the start of the project.
Findings

On average, Circles of Safety program participants who participated in a full-day training for recognizing and responding to CSA reported increases to their knowledge and awareness of sexual abuse and positive changes to their behaviors and confidence to handle sexual abuse.

Knowledge and Awareness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is an adult’s responsibility to prevent child sexual abuse</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding healthy sexuality development can help prevent child sexual abuse</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthy touch is important to a child’s sexual development</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know the specific behaviors that constitute contact sexual abuse of children</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>84%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

More participants correctly responded to knowledge questions at Posttest than Pretest

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percent Correct</th>
<th>Pretest</th>
<th>Posttest</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>34.8%</td>
<td>45.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

On average, program participants reported that the Circles of Safety program affected their knowledge and awareness “a great deal.” The majority of participants “strongly agreed” or had positive association with program components.

87% Participants said this training increased their knowledge about healthy sexuality for different ages “somewhat” or “a great deal”

98% Participants said this training increased their knowledge about the importance of safety planning “somewhat” or “a great deal”
Findings

On average, awareness to action supervisors, who participated in a 3-hour training to create community planning steps to enhance their organization’s safety planning reported increases to their knowledge and awareness of sexual abuse and improvement to their ability and confidence to handle sexual abuse.

Supervisor

100% Supervisors said as a result of my participation, “I increased my awareness of best practices to support families to create safe homes.”

93% Supervisors said as a result of my participation, “I increased my confidence to support staff and families in my program on sexual abuse prevention best practices.”

100% Supervisors expect to apply information from the training in their work.

92% Supervisors said this training “provided opportunities to initiate action steps to increase and improve the prevention actions of my program.”

100% Supervisors reported positive satisfaction with the training.

Confidence

Participants reported statistically significant increases in their ability to identify and respond to warning signs of CSA for all confidence items from pre to post testing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence</th>
<th>Not at All Confident</th>
<th>Not Very Confident</th>
<th>Confident</th>
<th>Extremely Confident</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participant confidence increased by 48% from pretest to posttest

Perceptions

71% Participants said the format of the training provided them with ample opportunities for participants to meaningfully interact with each other.

92% Participants said the training provided opportunities to initiate action steps to increase and improve the prevention actions of their program.

All (100%) Supervisor participants said the program was “good” or “excellent.”
Participants offered suggestions to improve the Circles of Safety program including:

- hosting a longer training
- facilitating more group interactions
- hosting follow up training via online modules
- adjusting some terminology during the training

NEXT STEPS

- Develop more webinars and workshops on ongoing safety planning activities
- Deliver the program to a larger sample
- Assess long-term impacts by tracking program and participant progress over time
- Collect data from a comparison group to measure changes between groups
- Consider developing a healthy sexuality program for children

Participants shared positive feedback about their experience with the Circles of Safety Training:

- “I really liked the combination of lecture, discussion and activity. It allowed us to practice what we learned.”
- “I am able to recognize concerning behaviors and have strategies on how to address them.”
- “It gave me tools to recognize problems or potential problems sooner.”
- “I have a greater understanding of how to work with children on sexual development, healthy/unhealthy behaviors, and a general better awareness/understanding of child sexual abuse.”

The aspects of the training that were most helpful were “recognizing behaviors and knowing how to approach them was very helpful because it’s better to know than not know.”