

## **PASSHE fighting child sexual victimization on college campuses**

*Staff report*

*Updated: 03/31/2014 12:37:54 PM EDT*

PublicOpinionOnline.com

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**Northampton, Mass. >>** Stop It Now! and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education have teamed up to develop a first-of-its-kind program that will train "Prevention Squads" to help prevent child sexual victimization on college campuses.

The first training sessions, in what could become a national model, will be held Thursday and Friday at the Dixon University Center in Harrisburg. Additional sessions will be held later at Slippery Rock, Bloomsburg and Cheyney Universities of Pennsylvania.

Participants from all 14 PASSHE universities eventually will take part in an extensive two-day program developed in collaboration with Stop It Now! (Now!), which, since 1992 has been preventing the sexual abuse of children by helping adults, families and communities take actions that keep kids safe - especially before they are ever harmed.

The pilot program will provide participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to help prevent children from becoming victims of sexual abuse. They will form "NOW! PASSHE Prevention Squads," which will lead the prevention efforts at their respective universities.

"PASSHE's staff and faculty have so many circles of influence and have the ability based in their positions to help to shape and create a culture of prevention," said Deb Donovan Rice, executive director of Stop It Now! "If they prevent one child from being abused or create a safer and more protective environment for a child that has been victimized to ask for help through this program, then PASSHE has succeeded."

"The serious issue of child sexual victimization cuts across all aspects of society," said PASSHE Chancellor Frank T. Brogan. "When one in six boys and one in four girls may be sexually abused before age 18, we have an obligation to play a role in prevention and awareness when and if we can. With the support of our provosts and vice presidents of student affairs, PASSHE has played an integral part in assisting Stop It Now! in developing a training program specifically for higher education. We are proud to be a leader in this endeavor."

Through the generosity of a donor focused on awareness and training in a college setting, Now! was able to take its past research and "Circles of Safety" modules to create a training program relevant to PASSHE universities to ensure that they met their needs and addressed their issues. After the pilot training has been reviewed, it will serve as a training model for universities and colleges across the country.

Now!'s expertise in sex abuse programming crosses the spectrum of prevention. The organization provides tools, training and support at the individual and relationship levels, and provides training and technical assistance, advocacy and leadership at the community and societal levels.

"The information shared at this two-day training is not a straight transfer of knowledge, but rather the beginning of helping to create a culture of prevention," said Kathleen Howley, PASSHE's senior associate vice chancellor of academic and student affairs. "Colleagues leaving the training will become highly informed individuals who will be prepared to integrate this 'new information' within their sphere of influence both on and off campus."

The additional training sessions will be held April 24 and 25 at Slippery Rock University, Oct. 20 and 21 at Bloomsburg University and Oct. 23 and 24 at Cheney University.

April is recognized as National Child Abuse Prevention Month.