



UNH center working to help child victims 3.15.04

By Rochelle Stewart

DURHAM - David Finkelhor, a sociology professor and researcher at the University of New Hampshire, wants to provide law-makers with information on ways to prevent child victimization. Through his research at the University of New Hampshire's Crimes against Children Research Center, he is attempting to do just that.

"We are evaluating children's advocacy centers, looking at the problem of kids victimized over the Internet, and trying to track the statistics against crimes against children and inform public policymakers," said Finkelhor, director of the center.

According to Finkelhor, CCRC was established in 1998 at UNH.

Finkelhor said the idea for the center grew out of the Family Research Laboratory, which is a lab at UNH devoted to studying family violence and other topics since 1975.

"We've been doing work here on child abuse and other kinds of victimization that children suffered," he said. "We try to encompass all different types of crimes and influence public policy."

According to CCRC's Web site, the center has four primary goals, which researchers hope will form feasible policy for child victims in the criminal justice system.

Additionally, the center works to increase knowledge on child victimization within the justice system. Researchers at the center also wish to enhance protection of child victims from continued victimization, and from unnecessary trauma and discomfort associated with the justice system.

In addition, researchers hope to establish universal rehabilitation of child victims through services and programs to aid in recovery and minimize long-term effects on development.

Finally, the center strives to enhance greater public accountability by evaluating the impact of the justice system's policies and programs on children.

Finkelhor said the center is funded through grants and foundations such as the Department of Justice and the Department of Youth and Families. He added that UNH funds some of the cost of the center

In the most recent study, researchers Kathy Kopiec, Janis Wolak and Finkelhor found that only 20 percent of children who suffered a serious sexual or physical assault received professional counseling in the year following the crime.

According to Finkelhor, the study concludes that professionals and agencies can do more to help juveniles receive help. The study was published in the international journal* Child Abuse and Neglect."