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'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."