

CoEHD Grant Application Form

Application					
Applicant Name:	Jennifer Foster				
Title:	Assistant Professor				
Department:	Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology				
Title of Proposal:	Partnering with Families to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Psychoeducational Program				
Amount Requested:	2,000				
Dates of Project:	Spring 2015				
Evaluation Guidelines					
	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Undecided 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
The proposed research/creative activity is well conceived and organized.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The proposed work will increase the likelihood that the applicant will secure external funding in the future.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The methods and/or procedures are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The plans for data analysis or evaluation critique are clearly stated and appropriate for the proposed activity.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
The costs for the proposed budget are clearly itemized and justified.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1
This project has the potential to advance the scholarly/creative reputation of WMU.	<input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> 4	<input type="checkbox"/> 3	<input type="checkbox"/> 2	<input type="checkbox"/> 1

Partnering with Families to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse: A Psychoeducational Program

Background

Child sexual abuse (CSA) is a pervasive global problem (Johnson, 2004). It is defined as “a type of maltreatment that refers to the involvement of the child in sexual activity to provide sexual gratification or financial benefit to the perpetrator, including contacts for sexual purposes, molestation, statutory rape, prostitution, pornography, exposure, incest, or other sexually exploitative activities” (USDHSS, 2013, p. 121). Sexual abuse includes contact and noncontact sexually abusive acts that are both overt and covert in nature. Overt abuse is “openly sexual” such as fondling or penetration. Conversely, covert abuse is sexual in nature but more difficult to identify such as an offender undressing within view of a child or making sexual comments to a minor (Wilhite, 2015). To date, there is no single agreed upon definition of sexual abuse, and each state has its own legal definition of CSA within civil and criminal statutes. This lack of a uniform definition is a challenge for clinicians and researchers (Foster & Carson, 2013).

In 2012, 62,939 new cases of CSA were reported to law enforcement (USDHSS, 2013). This figure does not include unreported incidents due to failure of adults to report or children keeping their abuse a secret. Prevalence statistics try to capture this larger group, with the most commonly cited statistic estimating that 1 in 4 females and 1 in 6 males are sexually abused before the age of 18 (Centers for Disease Prevention and Control, 2005).

Sexual abuse is a significant public health challenge that is viewed as a priority concern by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Hammond, 2003). In Michigan in 2012, Erin’s Law was signed by Governor Rick Snyder. This law was an important step in the protection of children. PAs 593-595 allow school boards to adopt and implement policies addressing child sexual abuse by designing developmentally appropriate programs for students. Unfortunately, parents and caregivers (hereafter referred to as parents) are often excluded from such programs or receive minimal information, such as a handout on sexual abuse that is sent home.

Parents are the most important person to partner with in the protection of children. Further, their inclusion in prevention trainings may indirectly impact the effectiveness of school based prevention programs implemented as a result of Erin’s Law (Wurtele, Moreno, & Kenny, 2008). “When parents are trained as prevention educators, their children receive repeated exposure to prevention information in the natural environment, thus providing a series of booster sessions to supplement other prevention efforts” (Wurtele et al., 2008). They need tools, resources, and support in order to reduce the likelihood of their children being sexually abused. Until we can talk to our children about sexual abuse with as much comfort as we do about other topics, they will continue to be victimized by adults and other children. Every parent needs to talk about sexual abuse to his/her children.

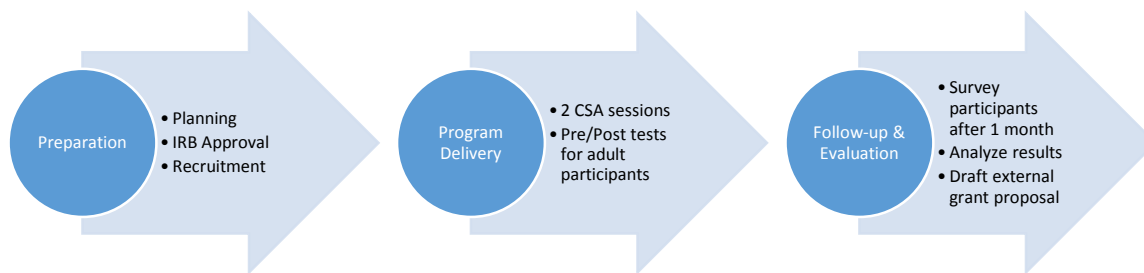
Although talking to one’s children about sexual abuse is necessary, it is a daunting task for many parents. In one study parents were asked their reasons for not discussing sexual abuse (Wurtele et al., 2008). The top five reasons included: “My child is too young to understand it” (32%), “I don’t know how to explain it” (28%), “I don’t have any materials to help me talk to my child about it” (26%), “The topic might frighten my child” (23%), and “I don’t know enough about the topic” (21%). This grant project will deliver and evaluate a prevention program for parents that targets these specific concerns.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project is to develop and implement a child sexual abuse prevention training for parents. The aim of this workshop is to educate families on the topic of sexual abuse. Parents will learn the warning signs of sexual abuse, red flags of sexual offenders, and developmentally appropriate ways to talk with children about CSA. Additionally, parents will learn how to handle a disclosure if it occurs by communicating to the child their belief and support. Parents will be provided with information about making a report of suspected abuse and resources for counseling if their child or someone they know discloses sexual abuse.

The overarching goal of the program is to empower parents. The training will help them understand the importance of talking with their children about sexual abuse and to provide them with accurate information about sexual abuse, victims, and offenders. The interactive workshop will teach strategies to increase their confidence. Further, the workshop will end with a family component to provide parents with an opportunity to implement what they learned and have a conversation with their children about sexual abuse (pending HSIRB approval). It is the hope of this researcher that through partnering with parents in the Kalamazoo community there will be a reduction in incidents of sexual abuse and an increase in proper reporting of abuse and services for victims.

Methods and Plan of Work



Phase One: Preparation

In this first phase, the curriculum, experiential activities, handouts, and power point presentation will be prepared. The primary investigator will submit the proposed study for Human Subjects Institutional Review Board review. Upon approval, recruitment will begin. Flyers will be posted at St. Thomas More Catholic Parish, which has already committed to providing this workshop. The recruitment materials will list an email and phone number for participants to register in advance. A reminder email will be sent the day before the training to all participants. Flyers will also be posted at an additional community location (to be determined). The researcher has established relationships with leaders in the Kalamazoo community and has discussed providing a community-based training. There is strong interest and potential locations for the second training include The Douglas Center or the Kalamazoo Public Library.

Phase Two: Program Delivery

In the second phase, the CSA prevention programs will be delivered, each lasting two hours. Prior to the delivery of content, participants will be asked to take a brief survey measuring their knowledge about sexual abuse, protective behaviors, and competency discussing it with

their children. The researcher has requested permission to use assessments developed by Dr. Wurtele who investigated the effectiveness of a CSA prevention training with a different target population. After the survey, the adults will be provided with information about sexual abuse, including: developmentally appropriate sexual behavior in young children, warning signs of potential abuse, offenders, disclosure, and specific ways to talk to children of any age about CSA. Supervision of young children, screening caregivers, and child on child sexual abuse (including sibling sexual abuse) will be discussed. This portion of the training will last 1 hour and 30 minutes. Role plays, handouts, and experiential activities will be used to increase participants' ability to apply what they are learning. A posttest (which is a modified version of the pretest) will be administered following the presentation. While the parents are meeting, their children will be supervised in a separate room and play large group games with master's level students (who have all been background checked). In the last 30 minutes of the workshop, children will rejoin their parents to have a family meeting (pending HSIRB approval). During this meeting, the parents will have an opportunity to share what they learned about sexual abuse in a developmentally appropriate way and ask their children if they have questions or concerns. The primary investigator will assist families if a disclosure occurs during this family meeting. All adult participants who complete the two hour training will receive a \$10 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the session.

Phase Three: Follow-up

One month following the training, participants will be contacted by email using the email address provided during registration. Parents will be asked to describe opportunities that they have had to talk with their children about sexual abuse in the month following the training and rate their competency in having these conversations. Participants will also be asked for feedback about the program, including what they thought was useful and what could be improved. Participants who complete the survey will be emailed a \$15 Amazon gift card.

All survey data will be analyzed using statistical software to identify changes in participants' knowledge, protective behaviors, and competency discussing sexual abuse. Further, feedback from participants will be used to make adjustments to the program. The primary investigator will use the results of the pilot study for scholarly presentations and publications. During the summer, the primary investigator will create a proposal for external funding to continue program delivery and evaluation on a larger scale.

Budget and Justification for 2 sessions (50 adults + children)

(omitted)

Anticipated Outcomes

As a result of participation in the program, it is anticipated that parents will have an increased knowledge about CSA and protective behaviors as measured by the posttest and follow-up survey. Specifically, they will be able to identify warning signs of abuse as well as red flags of potential offenders. Additionally, the parents will enforce healthy boundaries with their children and provide adequate supervision. Furthermore, parents will receive training in how to handle a disclosure and report suspected abuse. It is anticipated that through direct discussion and exposure to the topic of sexual abuse, parents will have less fear about talking with their children and will demonstrate changed attitudes about the importance of having regular conversations. Lastly, parents will be empowered to talk openly and honestly with their children during the final half hour of the training in the family time. It is anticipated that in the month

following the training, parents will continue conversations with their children and apply the knowledge and protective skills that they learned in the training (measured by the follow-up survey).

Plans for Continued Research

With additional funding, trainings could be provided in Kalamazoo and surrounding areas on a regular basis. These could be offered at schools, libraries, community centers, and faith-based organizations. The trainings provide an opportunity to equip parents with tools to reduce the likelihood of children in their care being sexually abused. Parents will also learn how to respond if abuse occurs. Research on prevention efforts is needed to validate their effectiveness. Additional trainings would allow for a larger, more diverse sample. A follow-up longitudinal study could be developed to measure the impact of the program over time.

In sum, CSA is “an extremely complex social problem that will require comprehensive solutions to eradicate” (Wurtele et al., 2008, p. 338-339). With all other forms of child abuse or maltreatment, the responsibility for prevention is placed on adults’ shoulders. We need “a shift in responsibility from children to adults. It is time for adults to step up and do their job of protecting children by creating ‘molester-free’ environments” (Wurtele, 2009, p.14). This is the first known program in the Kalamazoo area to help parents assume the important role of sexual abuse prevention educators.

References

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