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UNH Names New Director of SHARPP

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Contact: [Lori Gula](#)
603-862-0574
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September 24, 2003

DURHAM, N.H. -- A Massachusetts attorney whose work has focused on understanding the legal and social concerns of victims of sexual and domestic violence has been named the new director of the Sexual Harassment and Rape Prevention Program (SHARPP) at the University of New Hampshire.

“Throughout my career, my top priority is providing supportive services to survivors of sexual and domestic violence while holding perpetrators accountable for their actions,” said Layla D’Emilia-Shepherd, the new director of SHARPP. “To promote real changes in the area of abuse we must change attitudes toward violence. I believe the best place to start is with awareness, intervention and prevention programs with those most at risk. More than 13 percent of college women indicated that they had been forced to have sex in a dating situation (Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 2000). To that end, it is also important to reach out to all community leaders and providers who can identify resources, gaps in services and shared strategies to address this serious social problem.”

D’Emilia-Shepherd formally joins UNH Nov. 3, but already has been building relationships with the SHARPP Office and the university.

“Through the diligent work of the search committee, Ms. D’Emilia-Shepherd was identified as a person who could facilitate the work of the SHARPP office staff and volunteer advocates and peer educators as they continue to provide the best possible support for survivors and their allies and as we, as an institution, continue to work to create a culture where sexual and domestic violence and harassment are prevented,” says Mark Rubinstein, vice president for student and academic services.

Currently, D’Emilia-Shepherd is an associate lecturer in the Sociology and Criminal Justice Department at Curry College in Milton, Mass., and director of the domestic violence program for the Plymouth County (Mass.) District Attorney’s Office. At the district attorney’s office, she has developed and implemented both direct service and educational programs related to teen dating violence, sexual harassment, domestic and sexual violence, violence in the workplace, and the impact on children who witness domestic violence and stalking.

In addition to her role with the district attorney’s office, her legal experience includes legal counsel for the Massachusetts House Committee on Natural Resources and Agriculture, supervision staff attorney and legal advocate for the Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, and intake coordinator for the Family Law Project with the Women’s Bar Foundation in Boston. She has served as a guest lecturer at Bridgewater State College and Stonehill College.

D'Emilia-Shepherd earned her law degree from Suffolk University Law School, and a bachelor's in political science from West Virginia Wesleyan College.

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