7-26-2010

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July 26, 2010

DURHAM, N.H. – U.S. Deputy Associate Attorney General Karol Mason praised the work of the University of New Hampshire Crimes against Children Research Center and Family Research Lab, calling the UNH-U.S. Department of Justice a strong partnership.

"Child victims often become adult perpetrators. Neglect and abuse are passed down like a family inheritance. Children who are abandoned and abused become adults who are addicted and afflicted. Children's exposure to violence is a problem that must be a priority," Mason said.

"It takes these strong partnerships to establish new frameworks for addressing issues like violence. Dr. Finkelhor and his team took the vision of the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention and transformed its contents into a precedent-setting survey. By measuring children's exposure to violence in homes, schools and communities from birth to age 17, the survey provides the first comprehensive and cumulative measure of violent encounters during childhood," she said.

Mason made her remarks recently at the annual International Family Violence and Child Victimization Research Conference in Portsmouth. Sponsored by the two research centers, the conference that dates to 1981 brings together hundreds of leading researchers from around the world to discuss their groundbreaking research on a broad range of topics, including child maltreatment, intimate partner violence, sexual assault, as well as parenting and prevention of family violence.

"It was a great honor to have Karol Mason and the Justice Department showcase our research and the efforts of our staff and colleagues. Their interest in our views and request for assistance in developing their initiative affords us a tremendous opportunity," said David Finkelhor, director of the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center.

In 2008, the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center conducted the groundbreaking National Survey of Children's Exposure to Violence, a national study to document the incidence and prevalence of children's exposure to a broad array of violence, crime, and abuse experiences. Sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, it measured the past-year and lifetime exposure to violence for children age 17 and younger across several major categories: conventional crime, child maltreatment, victimization by peers and siblings, sexual victimization, witnessing and indirect victimization, school violence and threats, and Internet victimization.

Mason also discussed U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder's new national initiative on children exposed to violence, for which UNH researchers have served as consultants. "We look forward to continuing our beneficial partnership with all of you at the university, and we particularly look forward to you coming back to report to us and answer our many questions," Mason said.

"Whether a child is bullied by a peer, beaten by a parent, assaulted by a former friend, or witnesses violence, he or she is traumatically affected. Together we must work together to prevent violence when we can, minimize its impact when we can't and increase awareness of its importance all the time," she said.

Created in 1998, the UNH Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC) aims to combat crimes against children by providing high-quality research and statistics to the public, policy-makers, law enforcement personnel, and other child welfare practitioners. CCRC is concerned with research about the nature of crimes including child abduction, homicide, rape, assault, and physical and sexual abuse as well as their impact. More information: http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/
Since 1975, the UNH Family Research Laboratory (FRL) has devoted itself to understanding family violence and the impact of violence in families. The lab conducts comprehensive literature reviews, new theories, and methodologically sound studies. Researchers at the Family Research Lab have pioneered many of the techniques that have enabled social scientists to estimate directly the scope of family violence. More information: http://www.unh.edu/frl/index.html

The University of New Hampshire, founded in 1866, is a world-class public research university with the feel of a New England liberal arts college. A land, sea, and space-grant university, UNH is the state's flagship public institution, enrolling more than 12,200 undergraduate and 2,200 graduate students.

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