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Media Relations

September 29, 2015

UNH Receives Grant to Examine How Communities Build Capacity to Prevent Violence

DURHAM, N.H. – Researchers at the Prevention Innovations Research Center at the University of New Hampshire will study how people in communities work together to address violence thanks to a \$1.6 million grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The researchers will evaluate prevention strategies developed by GreenDot, Etc.

“The study will help us better understand how to assist broader communities, not just schools or campuses, to work together to address complicated problems like interpersonal violence,” said Vicki Banyard, professor of psychology and principal investigator on the grant. “We know much more about changing people individually than about what moves communities forward as a whole.”

GreenDot, Etc. is an organization that provides training and resources necessary to support individuals, institutions and communities in reducing power-based personal violence. The community strategy focuses on mobilizing individuals and organizations and equipping them with the motivation, knowledge and skills necessary to play an active role in building a safer community. The focus of the program expands beyond individual bystander intervention, and works within broader systems to bring about lasting change.

As part of the grant, the researchers will also be working with the New Hampshire Coalition against Domestic and Sexual Violence. “The coalition is thrilled to continue our collaborative work with the Prevention Innovations in a way that combines the strengths of outstanding researchers with the excellent crisis response provided every day by front-line staff at crisis centers,” said Executive Director Lyn Schollett. “We believe this continued joint work will result in even more effective strategies for preventing violence in the future.”

Research on violence prevention has often looked at the impact of classroom or workshop-based strategies. There are a number of programs that show promise in changing the attitudes and behaviors of groups of students using these approaches. But research is also clear that characteristics of communities where those individuals live and work and study are also related to how people think about problems like violence.

“We know from research that feeling close to and mattering to people in one’s community is related to lower rates of violence,” said Katie Edwards, assistant professor of psychology and women’s studies and an investigator on the grant. “It is exciting to be translating this research into community-based practice and action.”

“We know that interpersonal violence is a complex problem that will take more than one tool to

solve,” added Banyard. “It is time to take prevention to the next level and add community work to our toolkit.”

The Prevention Innovations Research Center at UNH develops, implements and evaluates evidence-based and customizable programs and practices with the mission to end sexual and relationship violence and stalking.

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