DURHAM, N.H.—The Crimes against Children Research Center (CCRC) at the University of New Hampshire has received an award of $1.5 million from the U.S. Department of Justice to assess whether a national system could do a better job of counting and tracking child abuse cases in youth serving organizations, like schools, churches, sports and camps.

“We hear disturbing cases of child abuse almost every week - abuse in daycare, religious institutions and recreational organizations - and we often ask, is there a more systematic way to keep track of these cases,” said Lisa Jones, associate professor of psychology and co-principal investigator on the study. “Our goal is to reach out and work with those who monitor these cases - like researchers, government officials, advocacy groups and abuse survivors - to see if there is a better way.”

The five-year project will take a closer look at the feasibility of such a system, suggest possible designs and conduct some preliminary studies to answer questions about how such a monitoring system would work. The CCRC will work with a broad range of stakeholders to address some key questions like what forms of maltreatment and abuse would be covered, what types of youth organizations would be involved and how would this new system integrate with other systems that calculate child abuse crimes. The study will assemble information about the strengths and weaknesses and how to apply criteria from other areas health, school, products and environmental safety.

“Child abuse in youth organizations is an alarming and pervasive occurrence that requires a unified, comprehensive national response,” said Senator Shaheen, chair of the Senate Appropriations subcommittee that funds the Department of Justice. “I’m proud that the University of New Hampshire’s Crimes against Children Research Center is being awarded $1.5 million by the Office of Justice Programs to aid with the development of a national tracking system to ensure these heinous crimes are stopped and victims are given the support they need. I worked to include language in the fiscal year 2022 government funding law in support of their important initiative. This project will lay the groundwork to help make sports teams, religious organizations, summer camps and other places safer for kids to enjoy.”

The study will also look closely at existing systems that could serve as a foundation for this effort. They include child abuse reporting systems like the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System (NCANDS); crime report data like that in the FBI’s National Incident Based Reporting System (NIBRS); national surveys that estimate prevalence by sampling cases from organizations (the National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect), law enforcement (the National Juvenile Online Victimization Survey) or the population at large (National Crime Victimization Survey).
Legislative and statutory frameworks that often underlie different monitoring systems will also be reviewed to see if there are key elements that could be beneficial and needed to create a new monitoring framework. Researchers will publish an interim report on their findings and the final two years of the study will be devoted to pilot testing some of the possible system components.

The University of New Hampshire (http://unh.edu) inspires innovation and transforms lives in our state, nation and world. More than 16,000 students from all 50 states and 71 countries engage with an award-winning faculty in top-ranked programs in business, engineering, law, health and human services, liberal arts and the sciences across more than 200 programs of study. A Carnegie Classification R1 institution, UNH partners with NASA, NOAA, NSF and NIH, and received $260 million in competitive external funding in FY21 to further explore and define the frontiers of land, sea and space.

Media Contact
Robbin Ray ’82 (unhtoday/contributor/robbin-ray-82) | Communications and Public Affairs | robbin.ray@unh.edu (mailto:robbin.ray@unh.edu) | 603-862-4864