

Brothers and Sisters

UNH to establish new Sibling Aggression and Abuse Initiative

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According to national surveys, one-third of children have been physically assaulted by a brother or a sister in the past year. To help reduce its prevalence and impact, the [Crimes Against Children Research Center](#), housed in the College of Liberal Arts at UNH, is establishing a new Sibling Aggression and Abuse Research and Advocacy Initiative (SAARA) that will work to change the perception that sibling aggression and abuse is not serious as well as provide guidance on how to prevent its occurrence.

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“Sibling aggression is the most common form of family violence,” said [Corinna Tucker](#), senior project director of SAARA. “While peer bullying is widely recognized, most people do not realize that more children are victimized by a brother or sister.”

“Sibling aggression is the most common form of family violence.”

This first-of-its-kind initiative will be funded over five years by an award of more than \$900,000 from the Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation. It will aim to reduce sibling aggression and abuse by creating user-friendly information and tools for the public and professionals on its website and at conferences and community educational forms. The intended audience includes educators, human service workers, physicians and mental health providers as well as parents. The initiative will also help to highlight the experiences of sibling abuse survivors and assist in their advocacy efforts.

The researchers say that each year children of all ages — from toddlers to teenagers — experience sibling aggression in the form of hitting, biting, kicking, name calling, intimidation, harassment and destruction of personal items as well as sexual abuse.

Roughly 4% are attacked with a weapon. While some of these incidences are minor, many are ongoing, injurious and terrifying. Studies show that all kinds of sibling abuse are linked to poorer mental and physical health and problematic interpersonal relationships with parents, peers and romantic partners. The initiative will also build a network of researchers, advocates and experts in relevant organizations in the fields of child and family welfare, parent education, pediatrics and mental health.

“There are no other organizations or websites specifically focused on the topic of sibling abuse,” said [David Finkelhor](#), professor of [sociology](#) and director of UNH’s Crimes Against Children

Research Center. “One of the roles we have tried to serve over the years is to draw attention and research to many of the less visible threats to children, like day care abuse, internet crimes, exposure to domestic violence and now sibling abuse.”

“We’re proud to support such a significant and much needed effort and look forward to seeing the difference the UNH initiative will make for many children, adult survivors and their families,” said Leslie Abrons, family representative for the Louis and Anne Abrons Foundation. “The program will shine a light on an overlooked problem and offer professionals and parents the much-needed tools to identify and treat those of all ages who are suffering in silence.”

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