Promising Practices in Carbondale

Tess D. Ford, Director

The SIU Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development received a contract from the Carbondale Police Department to conduct a community based needs assessment of persons with disability who are victims of crime. The ‘Promising Practices’ project submitted by the Carbondale Police Department was one of ten projects nation-wide funded by the SafePlace Foundation in Austin Texas, under a grant received from the Office for Victims of Crime, U.S. Department of Justice.

The first phase of the Promising Practices project involves key informant interviews with community agency personnel, housing complex staff, law enforcement, SIU disability services, victim advocates, and persons with disabilities to gather information about the scope of services provided, barriers encountered, and recommendations for enhancement. Focus groups are also being conducted with persons who have disabilities to gain insights into perceptions, services, issues, and barriers which need to be addressed when they or a family member with a disability has been the victim of a crime.

A flyer was developed and posted in various strategic locations around the community to allow opportunities for persons with a disability to call anonymously and share their experiences when they were a victim of a crime. Staffs of the CRHSSD personally take the calls, and subsequent interviews were handled confidentially.

According to the Office for Victims of Crime persons with a disability face a significant risk of being victimized. Anyone can be victimized by perpetrators of crime; however, persons with a disability can be more vulnerable to victimization than others and less able to access services necessary to assist them during the crisis of victimization. Further, a significant number of serious debilitating injuries occur each year due to crime. It is estimated that 17% of the US population has a disability such as Alzheimer’s disease, mental illness, mental retardation, blindness, visual impairment, deaf or hard of hearing. This means a significant number of persons and especially rural populations are more vulnerable to crime because of a disability. Rural populations more than any other group are experiencing growing numbers of older adults who face increasing risks of disability.

The CRHSSD will complete the report on needs assessment and develop a strategic plan during 2004. Furthermore, in conjunction with the Carbondale Police Department and the SafePlace Foundation in Austin Texas, CRHSSD staffs are developing plans to evaluate the Promising Practices project as the recommendations are implemented over the following two years in Carbondale.

For more information about the Promising Practices project call Dr. Tess D. Ford or Dan Shannon at 453-1262.
The skills learned during the six-week entrepreneurial experience not only provided the young students with primary job skills necessary for getting started with their own businesses; it also made these first-time job seekers more attractive to employers looking for individuals with initiative.

As a result of our program’s success, the University of Illinois (U of I) Extension invited COPC to collaborate with their existing entrepreneurial program, which is held every summer at Touch of Nature (TON). The U of I’s week-long program focuses on having youth develop their own business plans, while combining the outdoor activities offered at SIUC-TON, the program also provides them the opportunity to access resources such as the Morris Library and Dunn-Richmond Center. Individuals demonstrating initiative in the program will be encouraged to participate in a regional business plan competition for youth.

For more information about the SIUC-COPC Youth Entrepreneurial project call Kevin Clark at 549-0341.

Any questions regarding the CRHSSD Center Briefs should be addressed to Ainon Mizan at 618-453-4283 or ainon@siu.edu