

# Brighter Futures

**MYFDA Meeting Summary • January 15, 2008**

C/o Community Advocates, 4906 W. Fond du Lac Ave., Milwaukee WI 53216  
general@communityadvocates.net



## Steps to prevent child sexual assaults told at January BF meeting

Those who work with children are in a position to act to prevent the sexual assault of children.

Providing some ideas and background on how to best handle such situations at the January 15 Brighter Futures meeting were Cathy Arney, Director of Clinical Services and Christina Morris, Prevention Education Specialist, both of The Counseling Center of Milwaukee, Inc. Their topic was “Sexual Violence Prevention Education for Professionals.”

Their goal is to educate teachers, principals, adult workers and parents on developing prevention strategies against sexual assault of children. The group is open to making presentations to both adult and child groups.

Christina Morris opened with a question: Do you think children are more likely to be sexually assaulted by someone they know or someone they don't know? She said the answer is “someone they know,” but many children tend to say “someone they don't know,” probably because they are naïve.

She said 93% are sexually assaulted by someone they know. And, she said studies show that 25 to 33% of girls are sexually assaulted by the time they are 18. It's hard to

### ***What is BadgerCare Plus?***

**BadgerCare Plus went into effect on Feb. 1 as a new program for children and families in Wisconsin who need and want health insurance. BadgerCare Plus is for all kids, regardless of income.**

**BadgerCare Plus also offers access to comprehensive, affordable health care to working families and pregnant women in Wisconsin.**

**BadgerCare Plus is simple. It is easy to complete an online application at [access.wi.gov](http://access.wi.gov).**

**Cathy Arney (left) and Christina Morris of Counseling Center discussed sexual assault prevention steps**



get a real number, she said, because somewhere between 5 and 20% of such assaults are not reported. It is the purpose of the program to get the word out to schools, parents, teachers and children, she said.

“If it happens, we want to prevent it from happening again,” she said. “The only way to do that is to put it out there so that these kids will know they have resources and places to go to get help.”

The average age of sexual assault victims is 15, which is why the program's efforts are aimed at kids from 4 to 12<sup>th</sup> grades. “The earlier we can get to these the better, according to our research,” she said.

**Some 33% of the state's sexual assaults** are committed by juveniles, she said. Many youth don't know that the age of consent in Wisconsin is 18 and they often feel that it is OK to have sexual experiences in high school years, Morris added.

Also, statistics show that one out of 5 or 6 boys report having been sexually assaulted before age 18, a situation that is often not recognized, she said.

“I want them to get the picture that this happens to both girls and boys,” Morris said.

Arney said that the percentage of boys being assaulted may be as high as for girls, but less abuse is reported because there are many stigmas about boys being victims. “Boys have much less support to come forward to say they have been abused,” she said.

*(Continued on Page 2)*



It's time to sign in! PLEASE PRINT

## Steps to prevent sexual assault ...

*Continued From Page 1*

**Morris defined child sexual abuse** as the misuse of children for sexual gratification by an adult or a person in a position of power, including physical contact of most types and nonphysical contact such as forcing a child to look at exposure of sexual organs or pictures.

She listed the typical signs that might indicate whether a child has been sexually abused, including: irritation or pain to the genital areas, vaginal or penile discharge, bloody underclothing, frequent urination or pain while urinating, unusual genital area odor, pregnancy, and trouble controlling bowel movements.

Some of the sexual signs, she said, include promiscuity, acting out, sexually abusing a younger child, questions of denial about one's sexual identify.

Some behavioral changes are reluctance or fear of certain persons or places, reluctance to enter showers or wash-rooms, irritable behavior, regression such as retreating into baby habits, self consciousness about genital areas, nightmares, bed-wetting, difficulty falling asleep, fears, running away, overreaction about whether a child has been touched, plus others.

**She said that just because a child** may show some of these signs does not mean the child is experiencing sexual assault, but they are warning signs. Noting the warning signs may prompt a report being made, and Arney said that statistics show that once a report has been made, there's a good chance the sexual attacks will end.

She identified "red flags" set off by those who would assault a child, including things that are said and done which makes a child feel they can't trust a person. "It's that small voice in side that goes, 'oh, oh.'"

Bystanders will also have "red flags," Arney said, often

because they are older and more experienced than the child. "You as bystanders must notice who picks the kid up at your school or shop and are they related to them? Have you ever seen them before, or are they older?"

Many of the children served by BF agencies are often those who "have something missing in their lives," which makes them really vulnerable to being lured by someone they feel is attractive.

"Lots of our kids are in vulnerable situations all the time and we want them to learn what to do to make sure they remain safe," Arney said. "You have to talk about this stuff ahead of time, so that children are prepared when the situations occur.

"Help the children figure out what their limits are and how far they want to go. Give them the message that no one else has the right to coerce them or tell them what they should do sexually."

"Keep in mind that as mandated reporters, we don't have to have the evidence," Arney said. "It's actual or suspected sexual abuse. If the 'red flag' is strong enough, that's the beauty of being a mandated reporter, we only have an ethical and moral duty to protect the children."



Materials examined at January meeting.

Kathy Stressman from **Stop it Now!** advised that adults need to work as a team to also recognize 'red flags', to pay attention to them when they occur and to brain-storm possible solutions. . . "Adults need to step up" and take an active role in prevention of child abuse.

Kathy Stressman's 2008 efforts will be directed towards working with staff from child care centers. They are in a pivotal position to recognize possible harm to children at their facilities.

# Youth Survey Findings to Set Stage for Action

Joe Volk, director of the Milwaukee Brighter Futures project, said that the revealing results of the Brighter Futures Youth Survey will not be let to drop, and that the survey will serve to spur action on resolving some of the concerns the survey showed.

He said the BF leadership is planning two things. The first step is to convene a Milwaukee leadership conference involving officials from the city and the county along with representatives from the business sector, organizations like the Greater Milwaukee Committee and other groups.

The conference will probe the meaning of the Youth Survey results and what kinds of strategies should be developed to respond to the concerns, he said.

The second step is to sit down with state legislators and state officials in the Department of Health and Family Services to address some of the strategies, he said. Officials there need to be made aware of youth issues here, he said.

Volk said: "It's one thing to put this survey out there, but we need to keep this living on! This isn't over yet and we hope to plan on use this as a tool."

## Survey Gains Attention

The Brighter Futures Youth Survey, which involved asking Milwaukee youth from 12 to 17 about their life habits and feelings, has gained much public attention.

Not only did the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel carry a good summary of the results in its Jan. 1 edition, but the BF Coordinator Racquel Bell was interviewed on the Eric Von radio program on WMCS.

The survey is available by PDF file upon request. Send your request to [general@communityadvocates.net](mailto:general@communityadvocates.net)



Participants await start of January meeting.

## Brighter Futures Notes

**TEEN PREGNANCY PREVENTION NETWORK.** One of the major goals of Brighter Futures is the prevention of teen pregnancy, which continues to be a major problem in the Milwaukee area. The Milwaukee BF coalition has developed the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network, which regularly meets the second Thursday of each month at noon at Silver Spring Neighborhood Center, 5460 N. 64th St. For information, contact Racquel Bell, 449-4777.

**CONFERENCE ON TEEN DATING, SEXUAL VIOLENCE SET:** A two-day, statewide Summit on Teen Dating and Sexual Violence has been scheduled to bring together a diverse,

multi-disciplinary audience to help formulate state and local responses to the growing problem of teen dating and sexual violence. Teens are welcome and encouraged to attend. The conference will be held April 15 and 16 in Stevens Point with the sponsors being the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Division of Children and Family Services, the Governor's Council on Domestic Abuse, the WI Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the WI Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Department of Justice, Office of Crime Victim Services, the Wisconsin Women's Council and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

For information, *please request PDF form by request to [general@communityadvocates.net](mailto:general@communityadvocates.net).*

**MENTAL HEALTH PARITY DAY SET FEB. 20.** A bill that would provide mental health parity – that is, a bill to ensure that insurance companies cover mental health the same way they cover physical health – is making its way through the legislature right now. Lt. Governor Lawton has invited everyone to join her on **February 20, 2008** in **Madison** for **Mental Health Parity Action Day**. For information go to [http://www.lt.gov.state.wi.us/health\\_form](http://www.lt.gov.state.wi.us/health_form).

**January 2008 MYFDA Attendance**  
(Listed by Agency)

<b>First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Agency</b>
Tanya	Torres	Abri Health Plan
Janeen	Boone	Agape Community Center
Kasandra	Tarkington	AGAPE Community Center
Priscilla	Neal	Aurora Family Service
Cyndi	Ody-Weis	Bethany
Natalie	Cooper	Boys & Girls Club
Aricka	Evans	Community Advocates
Joe	Volk	Community Advocates
Katie	Gaulin	Community Advocates
Kenneth	Germanson	Community Advocates
Racquel	Bell	Community Advocates
Mark	O'Neil	Diverse & Resilient
Peggy	Neal	Heartlove Place
Karen	Kolberg	IMPACT
Duncan	Shrout	IMPACT Inc.
Maria	Kolda	IMPACT, Inc.
Michael	Bersch	Journey House
Reyna	Gengler	La Causa
Kelly	Sonnenberg	La Causa FRC
Yolanda	Espino	Latino Community Center
Adebisi A.	Agoro	MHD Plain Talk
Deborah	Bryant	Milwaukee Adolescent Health
Lenora	Shaw	Milwaukee Adolescent Health Program
Brian	Stewart	Milwaukee Christian Center
Julie	Bock	Milwaukee LGBT
Kathryn	Mllsna	Milwaukee Public Library
Norma	Madison	Milwaukee Urban League
David	O'Day	Modjeska Youth Theatre Co.
JoAnn	Craft	Neighborhood House
Jody	Rhodes	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Daryl	McNeil	New Concept Self Dev. Ctr.
Ava	Hilliard	New Concept Self Development
Kenyatta	Sinclair	Next Door Foundation
Jan	Buchler	Parenting Network
Patrice	Knox	Parents Plus
Trudy	Ranallo	Parents Plus, Inc.
Marge	Kreuser	Perez-Pena, LTD
Lisa	Drouin	Planning Council
Joseph	Kubisiak	Safe & Sound
Pastor Lee A.	Shaw	St. Gabriel COGIC
Greg	Lewis	St. Gabriel's COGIC
Kathy	Stresman	Stop It Now
Cathy	Arney	The Counseling Center
Lisa	Gumm	The Counseling Center
Erin	Ebert	The Parenting Network
Shaunte	James	Urban League
Rod	Nelson	West Allis Police Department
Sally	Ladky	WI Abstinence Coalition

**Please send any corrections to [general@communityadvocates.net](mailto:general@communityadvocates.net)**

**NOTE: All Brighter Futures funded agencies are expected to attend monthly MYFDA meetings, according to their contract.**