



Spring 1-7-2011

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Winthrop University

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Winthrop University, "DOJ Grant to Fund Training, Community Response for Women Victims of Violence" (2011). *Winthrop News 2011*. 2.

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01/07/2011


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DOJ Grant to Fund Training, Community Response for Women Victims of Violence

Quick Facts

- Health and Counseling Services will use the three-year Department of Justice grant to create the Office for Victims Assistance on campus.
- The grant also will fund training for students, faculty and staff on violence against women, including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking.

ROCK HILL, S.C. - Though sexual violence against South Carolina woman is common, reporting these incidents is not. With support from a **\$299,209 U.S. Department of Justice grant**, Winthrop's **Health and Counseling Services** will partner with community organizations to take a stand against this silence. This marks the first DOJ grant Health and Counseling Services has received.

The **DOJ grant**, a three-year grant which does not require a financial match from Winthrop, will fund the creation of a community response to women victims and survivors of violence of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking. Housed under the umbrella of **Health and Counseling Services**, the **Office for Victims Assistance** will be staffed by a full-time, grant-funded victim services coordinator who will act as a liaison between the university and community partners, including **Safe Passage, Inc.** and the **York County 16th Circuit Solicitor's Office**, said Michelle Mann, director of **Health and Counseling Services**.

The victim services coordinator also will work with student victims and offer direct, immediate and ongoing support. As part of the grant, a part-time counselor will be hired to counsel victims and survivors.

The **Office for Victims Assistance** will organize violence against women services – whether educational training or immediate or ongoing support – efforts primarily at Winthrop while also involving the community, said Mann.

Another component of the DOJ grant will be the implementation of **campus-wide education and training** for students as well as faculty and staff. Still in the development stage is an online training course for incoming students that outlines what dating violence is. Training also will be created for faculty and staff to help make them become more aware of violence against women, recognize signs of dating violence in students and show them where to direct students who need support and counseling.

Raising awareness about sexual violence on campus is the major goal of the project, according to Mann.

“South Carolina is one of the worst states in terms of sexual violence. We know that it happens; it’s just not that widely reported,” she said. “We want to increase awareness so that people report instances of sexual violence, whether it’s dating violence or sexual assault.”

Mann noted that in the future **Health and Counseling Services** will reapply for the grant, and possibly use the funding as a springboard onto another grant. The program could grow in the future to include student peer groups and the establishment of sexual violence awareness organizations.

For more information about the program, contact Mann at 803/323-2206 or mannm@winthrop.edu.

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