



**Eliminating Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment
in Howard Center's Park Street and
Transition House Programs**

January – December 2016

About Howard Center

Our mission is to improve the well-being of children, adults, families, and communities.

We offer life-saving professional crisis and counseling services to children and adults; supportive services to individuals with autism and developmental disabilities who need help with education, employment, and life maintenance skills; counseling and medical services for those struggling with substance abuse, and intensive interventions for adults with serious and persistent mental health challenges. Howard Center was founded in 1873 and serves more than 15,000 individuals and families every year.

PREA's Applicability

Howard Center's Park Street and Transition House programs provide residential placement and treatment services under contract with Vermont's Department of Children and Families' Family Services Division – Youth Justice. As a result of this relationship, these programs must comply with the standards in accordance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA). To that end, Howard Center has updated and developed policies and procedures to address resident safety in these programs.

Howard Center has a zero tolerance policy regarding sexual abuse and sexual harassment of individuals. This prohibition is supported by the agency's Code of Ethics, the Policy Prohibiting Physical, Emotional, and Sexual Abuse of Clients and the Policies and Procedures Addressing the Prison Rape Elimination Act in our operations manual as well as the Violence Prevention and Weapons-Free Workplace Policy in the Personnel Manual. All staff members, contractors, interns, or volunteers working at Park Street or Transition House facilities or having direct contact with residents of those facilities are required to sign a form stating they understand the zero tolerance policy and their role as a mandatory reporter.

About Park Street and Transition House Programs

Park Street provides intensive residential treatment to adolescent males ages 12-17 with sexual harming behaviors. Residents attend the onsite Fay Honey Knopp School, a licensed school that provides a supportive, therapeutic and safe educational environment.

Transition House is a residential program for adolescents and young men aged 16-22 which provides supportive housing and preparation for independent living. This program provides youth with high-risk, harmful and/or delinquent behaviors, an opportunity to live in a supervised setting in order to build the skills to necessary to be successful as adults.

PREA Compliance Activities

At the beginning of 2016, the agency continued its efforts to meet the requirements of PREA. In March 2016, a certified Department of Justice PREA auditor, Sharon Pette, informed us that both the Park Street and Transition House programs achieved full compliance with the PREA standards.

Sexual Abuse Data for 2016

Program	Youth on Youth Sexual Abuse	Staff on Youth Sexual Abuse	Youth on Youth Sexual Harassment	Staff on Youth Sexual Harassment
<i>Park Street Program</i>	1	0	6	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0
2015 Data				
<i>Park Street Program</i>	0	0	2	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	0	0

There was an increase in the number of reports of youth on youth abuse and sexual harassment at the Park Street program. This increase may be a reflection of the work the program has done educating residents and staff about PREA as well as the makeup of the residents in the group home. As noted above Park Street is treatment program for adolescent males with sexual harming behaviors, thus youth enter into the program with intensive sexualized behavioral needs.

There was one allegation of youth on youth sexual abuse that was reported, investigated and determined to be unfounded. The victim was separated from the alleged perpetrator and given previous allegations the perpetrator was removed from the program. Subsequently, it was determined that he needed a different program and did not return to Park Street.

There were six allegations of youth on youth sexual harassment reported and all of them were investigated. Five of the allegations were substantiated and the other was unsubstantiated. Upon receipt of each report, victims were separated from the alleged perpetrators and safety plans were put in place. Following the completion of the sexual harassment investigations, summaries of incidents with recommendations to ensure safety are distributed to all staff to ensure they are aware of the incident and ensure compliance with implementing strategies for safety. It was found that three of the incidents occurred in the common areas of the facility, one during a treatment group, one at school, and one of them while residents were in the agency van.

There was one resident involved in five of the seven incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. Due to concerns about his behavior and safety of the other residents, the resident was discharged from the program. Park Street also hired additional staffing to help address the treatment needs of the residents and help prevent future incidents from happening.

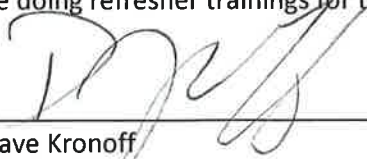
There were no incidents of staff on youth sexual abuse or sexual harassment at Park Street.

There were no incidents of youth on youth or staff on youth sexual abuse or sexual harassment at Transition House.

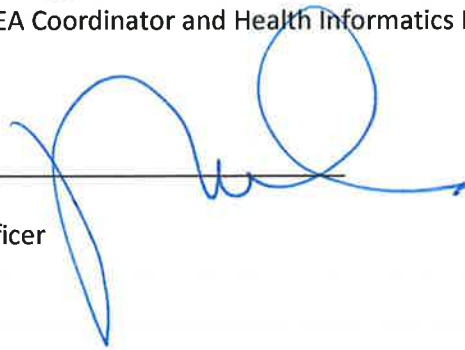
Conclusion

This increase in reports by the Park Street facility of youth on youth sexual abuse and sexual harassment were not unexpected given who is served by this program and the presenting sexual behavioral issues they have. Treatment at Park Street is provided to help aid in changing such behavior. Given the involvement of one discharged resident (who was highly sexually reactive) in a majority of the incidents, it is hopeful that there may be a decrease over the next year.

The programs continue to educate new residents about PREA, train new staff as they come on and will be doing refresher trainings for those staff that completed the training in 2016.



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