



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

January – December 2017

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 necessary to be successful as adults. This year the agency decided to move this program to another location—the program is now located a few miles outside of downtown Burlington in Essex Junction.

PREA Compliance Activities

Throughout the year, the agency continued its efforts to meet the requirements of PREA.

- All staff, contractors and volunteers complete the PREA training annually.
- PREA information is provided to all new residents and their guardians and information is readily available to them at each site.
- All allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment are thoroughly investigated and resulting findings and plans are shared with all staff at the site, guardians and the Vermont Department

for Children and Families Residential Licensing & Special Investigations Unit to ensure the safety of the residents.

- When the Transition House program moved to its new location, a thorough review of the camera surveillance system was conducted and the system was upgraded.
- In December 2017, the certified Department of Justice PREA auditor, Sharon Pette, returned to audit each program again. Prior to the end of the year, the agency received preliminary feedback from the auditor that both programs were in full compliance with the PREA standards.

Sexual Abuse Data for 2017

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>	2	0	2	0
<i>Transition House</i>	0	0	1	0
2016 Data				
<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

Park Street

There was an increase in the number of reports of youth on youth abuse at the program. This increase may be a reflection of the makeup of the residents in the group home this year. As noted above Park Street is a treatment program for adolescent males with sexual harming behaviors, thus youth enter into the program with intensive sexualized behavioral needs.

Both of the reported allegations of youth on youth sexual abuse were investigated and substantiated. In each incident, the victim was separated from the alleged perpetrator and steps taken to protect and provide support to the victim.

There were two allegations of youth on youth sexual harassment reported and both of them were investigated and substantiated. Upon receipt of each report, victims were separated from the alleged perpetrators and safety plans were put in place.

Following the completion of any sexual abuse or sexual harassment investigations, summaries of the 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. The identified perpetrators for both the incidents of sexual abuse and sexual harassment were discharged from the program to help ensure safety of others.

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

Transition House

During this year, Transition House had its first PREA incident. An allegation of youth on youth sexual harassment was received, investigated and substantiated. Upon receipt of the report, the victim was separated from the alleged perpetrator and a safety plan was put in place. The investigation did determine that the incident occurred in an area of the facility where there was a gap in camera surveillance. In response, an additional camera was added to the system.

Following the completion of any sexual abuse or sexual harassment investigations, summaries of the 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.

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

Conclusion

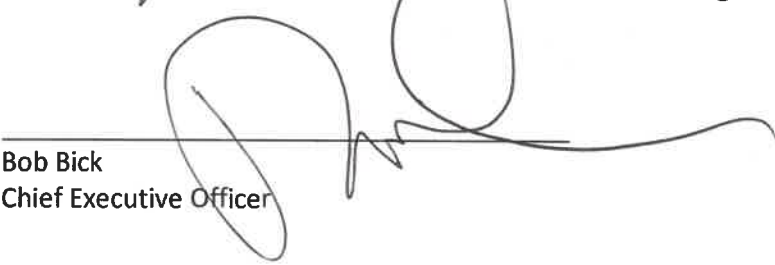
The significant decrease in sexual harassment reports at Park Street may be a reflection of the effort put forth by the program as all indicators strongly suggest that the residents of that program are well aware of PREA.

A recommendation of the recent federal audit is to install a camera surveillance system in Park Street. The agency is looking into it.

The increase in the camera surveillance system at Transition House should improve the safety of residents in the program.



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