

## **DHS: The Impact** **Sexual Assault Awareness Month**

April 3, 2015

April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month and the Department of Human Services (DHS) in partnership with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape (PCAR), seeks to raise awareness around sexual violence and provide prevention education to individuals and communities.

Governor Wolf's proposed 2015-2016 budget includes additional human services funding to expand rape crisis and domestic violence programs and services.

### **FY 2015-2016 Proposed Budget Initiatives**

- \$1.5M to expand domestic violence programs and services
- \$0.9M to expand rape crisis programs and services

In FY 2013-2014, DHS funded rape crisis services for approximately 30,000 victims of sexual violence and their significant others, including an estimated 117,537 hours of service from PCAR sub-grantees. PCAR provides sub-grants to 50 local nonprofit rape crisis programs covering all 67 counties.

Rape crisis programs provide emergency crisis intervention services and ongoing support in dealing with emotional and physical trauma. Rape crisis direct services include: 24-hour hotline, crisis counseling, and accompaniment through the medical and criminal justice systems. These programs also provide services to their communities at large through the provision of prevention education activities to schools and community groups. Training and systems advocacy are also provided to a broad scope of professionals to enhance their responsiveness to victims of sexual violence and significant others.

### **Prevention in the Community**

The Women's Resources of Monroe County, Inc. and East Stroudsburg High School South partnered in 2014 to develop a leadership group designed to help prevent sexual abuse and domestic violence. The male-only group, Boys By Birth Men By Choice, was the first primary prevention education program of its kind in Monroe County and worked in a school setting to help students respond appropriately in an environment where violence occurs. Over 100 students applied and teachers selected 30 program participants.

Through ten 90-minute sessions, the group learned about services available to survivors of sexual and domestic violence, how to become activists for a world free from violence and also strategies for interviewing in problematic situations.



The students developed a main project, Cypher, a freestyle rap to connect with their peers to express a positive message about ending sexual violence and domestic abuse, speaking out against bullying, sexting, child pornography, and suicide. Overall the project was a success and the group hopes other schools adopt this idea to tackle sexual abuse prevention. Additional information about PCAR's services and programs is located at [www.pcar.org](http://www.pcar.org).