



South Carolina Teachers Lead Nation in Training to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse

COLUMBIA, S.C., Oct. 14 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -- South Carolina teachers are leading the nation to keep kids safe thanks to a public / private initiative to help prevent, recognize and react responsibly to signs of child sexual abuse.

By the end of this year, 20,000 S.C. teachers and school employees will complete child sexual abuse prevention training. That's more than 40-percent of the state's 54,000 school staff and sets a national record among U.S. school systems, according to Darkness to Light (D2L), a national non-profit that administers the training. By the end of 2010, state officials anticipate more than 38,000 (75-percent) school teachers and school employees will complete the training.

Funding for the training programs has been boosted through donations of \$25,000 by Select Health of South Carolina and \$15,000 by Blue Cross Blue Shield of South Carolina, two of the state's largest health insurance carriers.

The training was launched statewide in 2008 by the S.C. Department of Education in partnership with D2L. Dr. Jim Rex, S.C. Department of Education Superintendent, said several S.C. school districts have already trained 100-percent of their educators.

Impact of Child Sexual Abuse

In the U.S. alone, there are an estimated 40 million adult survivors of child sexual abuse. It is linked to a host of social issues including teen pregnancy, psychiatric disorders and substance abuse.

Statistics show one in four girls and one in six boys are sexually abused before age 18. Additionally, it ranks second to murder as the most expensive victim crime in the U.S., where costs exceed \$35 billion annually.

Teachers and school staff are in a unique position to prevent, recognize and intervene appropriately for a child. A 2005 U.S. Department of Education study revealed that an estimated nine-percent of U.S. children are sexually harassed or abused at school during their school career.

About Darkness to Light

D2L is a national non-profit, 501c3, and has created prevention education programs in 47 states and 10 foreign countries. Training programs are open to the public. Schedules and online training are available at www.d2l.org.

Anne Lee, Founder and President of D2L, says public education is an essential tool to provide real impact to prevent sexual abuse of children.