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SCAN PROGRAM SUMMARY

A Prevention Program of the National Children's Advocacy Center

SCAN (Stop Child Abuse & Neglect) is the largest school-based prevention program in the State of Alabama. Begun as the Committee on Child Abuse in the 1970's, the agency was a project of the Junior League of Huntsville. It included one-day presentations in grades K, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 10. The program's primary message was and remains SAY NO, GET AWAY, TELL SOMEONE, AND BE BELIEVED. In the 1990's, research indicated that child abuse prevention programs are more effective with multiple sessions in the classroom. From this directive, SCAN expanded the third, fifth, and seventh grade programs to three sessions each. One of the main funding sources, the Alabama Children's Trust Fund, also required this change.

SCAN provides its services throughout Huntsville, Madison City and Madison County. With the help of over 25 trained volunteers and interns, we present child abuse prevention programs to students in grades K, 1, 3, 5 and 7 in City, County and private schools. These programs, which reach an average of 16,000 children a year, are an approved part of the curricula in all three school systems. Due to the grim facts that one out of every four girls and one out of every six boys are sexually assaulted by the time they are 18 AND caretakers cannot be with youth 24/7, SCAN provides a much needed service to children and young teens; they gain the information and the skills necessary to resist becoming a victim.

Children in kindergarten and first grade participate in "THERE IS SOMEONE TO TALK TO" program. Through a puppet show, which depicts the puppets having bullying, neglect, physical and sexual abuse problems, kids learn many children like themselves experience very serious problems. Follow up discussion takes place about the abused puppets to teach students what to do to prevent abuse from happening and what to do in case a child has already experienced abuse. Students also participate in a simple role play reviewing the safety rules. This sets the foundation for the message, "**say no, get away, and tell someone.**" Concepts of appropriate and inappropriate touches are discussed along with safety rules. A list of who to tell is outlined for the children and handouts are given to reinforce the lessons.

The "BREAK THE SILENCE" program encompasses a wide array of issues for third and fifth grade students. The first video for third grade students addresses the issue of bullying and assertiveness. On the second day, a video is shown which explores a sexually abused child and what he does to disclose his touching problem. Issues of family secrets, assertiveness, and who are strangers/acquaintances are discussed. Fifth grade students are shown a video dealing with different situations concerning assertiveness, anger, and fear of new situations. Children learn

we are all responsible for our “emotional IQ,” and the emotions described above can be channeled into positive situations with the right types of communication and actions. The second video reviews the stories of two children who have experienced sexual abuse. This video reviews the facts that it is never the child’s fault and to for those who are victims to keep telling until someone believes them. Each program has follow up discussion, role plays and handouts to emphasize the major points of the lessons. Handouts are provided to teachers for the third day, which emphasize self-respect through role-playing and discussion. (Note: The schools have the option to choose the two-day presentation or the one-day presentation [the second day for both third and fifth grades is conducted for the one-day program]. Because SCAN is limited in staff and resources, the two day presentation is done on a “first come, first serve” basis.)

In the seventh grade program “FROM THE SHADOWS,” two videos are presented for students to view on two separate days, one dealing with conflict and communication within the family and one on sexual abuse. The first video teaches students how conflicts can be avoided or lessened with positive communication skills. The video demonstrates the positive alternatives of communicating calmly and maturely as compared to just getting angry and “storming out.” The second video delicately deals with the problem of sexual abuse. Students learn to recognize appropriate expressions of familial love as compared to experiences where young people are made to feel they must keep secrets about situations which make them feel uncomfortable. The students also learn about community resources, discuss to whom they may talk about the problem, and practice dealing with difficult situations through role plays. Handouts are provided to teachers and students for the third day which emphasize conflict resolution through role-playing and discussion.

Program outcomes include several different issues. Students will be less vulnerable to child abuse because they are exposed to personal safety lessons through our programs. We receive evaluations from teachers and conduct pre- and post-tests on knowledge gained on a random sampling of students in one grade each year. Teachers and counselors will also become more aware of the benefits of prevention and gain knowledge on identifying and responding to child abuse. Packets of information on abuse are distributed to teachers and counselors. SCAN also presents child abuse awareness workshops to civic clubs, school faculties, day cares, PTA programs, and for counselor in-service meetings.

Volunteers for the programs, coming from persons of all walks of life, have caring and compassionate attitudes towards children. Our volunteers, both male and female, have a variety of occupations (former teachers, former CPS workers, personnel managers, real estate agents, retirees, college students, and persons who do not work). They are thoroughly screened, trained and evaluated by the program staff. They sign confidentiality statements included in the volunteer form and they are given the policy on how to deal with disclosures in the classroom.

Upon disclosure, program staff reports the information to the school counselor and to the CPS department within our county.