

Summary of Evaluation Conducted on *Darkness to Light* Programs

Six studies evaluating *Darkness to Light's* programs and products have been completed, and a further study is in the final stages of completion.

Evaluation #1: 2003-2005

Primary Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse

- Study completed by Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D., National Crime Victims Research Center, Medical University of South Carolina
- Project consisted of 2 complimentary studies: one quantitative study and one qualitative study. The first evaluated the efficacy of the content and presentation of *Darkness to Light's* media and educational products for changing knowledge, attitudes and preventative behaviors in a community sample. A parallel step in the evaluation of *Darkness to Light's* primary prevention strategies for child abuse, Study 2 was a qualitative investigation examining the attitudes, opinions and suggestions regarding the media and educational products from community members in the forms of focus groups.
- Experimental conditions included televised public announcements, educational pamphlet, televised public announcement plus education control condition (pamphlet) and no media control.
- Study included 200 participants

Taken together, findings from Studies 1 and 2 indicate that *Darkness to Light's* media campaign may be useful in increasing awareness and knowledge about child sexual abuse (child sexual abuse). Not only was knowledge impacted, but community members viewed the campaign materials as useful products for increasing awareness about this important topic. Findings indicate that a media campaign may serve as a useful first step towards public education so that a forum for prevention could be established in communities. Providing more community outreach in addition to a public media campaign may improve prevention strategies.

Evaluation #2: 2003-2004

Evaluation of the Efficacy of Sexual Abuse Prevention Information provided by *Darkness to Light* through the "7 Steps to Protecting Our Children" Approach

- Child Sexual Abuse Web Based Survey – 854 participants
- Study completed by Morgan Pleasant and Trisha Folds-Bennett, Ph.D., College of Charleston
- Evaluation time period to collect data – November 2003 – April 2004
- Results indicated a significant increase in knowledge about child sexual abuse prevention after exposure to the 7 Steps booklet.

As predicted, post exposure scores were significantly higher than pre-exposure scores, indicating that knowledge about child sexual abuse changed after exposure to the "7 Steps" information. Demographic group difference at pre-exposure (gender, age, education, marital status, and children differences) disappeared at post exposure. This finding suggests that 7 Steps effectively reached individuals with varying degrees of knowledge regarding child sexual abuse, and then brought all groups to the same performance level. Although random assignment to the pre-post exposure and pre-only groups was impossible due to the web-based nature of the study, analyses suggest that the pre-post groups were demographically similar, again supporting generalization of the findings.

Evaluation #3: 2004-2005

Adult Education for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse The Efficacy of *Darkness to Light's* "7 Steps to Protecting Our Children" In Web-Based versus Print Version Formats

This study was conducted by Trisha Folds-Bennett, Ph.D. Participants included 116 undergraduate students at the College of Charleston, who were randomly assigned to one of 8 groups. The study used two separate Solomon 4 Group Research Designs to test the effectiveness of the web-based and the print version of the prevention materials. In addition to comparing the efficacy of each version against a control group, the research design afforded comparison of the web-based and print versions of the prevention information. The results established that regardless of presentation format, exposure to 7 Steps has a significant impact on knowledge and attitudes about sexual abuse and its prevention. The use of college students heightens the validity of the findings because it “de-confounds” the effects of parental status, marital status, education and age established in the previous study. A second critical finding in this study is that the web-based and print versions have essentially the same impact on knowledge and attitudes.

Evaluation #4: 2005

Impact of *Stewards of Children* Prevention Curriculum

This study was conducted by Trisha Folds-Bennett, Ph.D. A survey and follow-up survey of adults taking the *Stewards of Children* training showed that the training increased knowledge and changed participant’s child-protective behavior over the long-term. Participants also rated various elements of the training for their impact. This survey showed that participants found the most impact in the following elements: the general information about child sexual abuse; the motivational component of the training; the potential to change attitudes; the importance for youth-serving organizations; and the emotion of the taped interviews integrated into the training.

- 477 evaluations received during the SOC pilot phase - 2005
- Evaluation tool used scale of 1 - 5
- Participants representing the 9 pilot partners evaluated the effectiveness of the SOC curriculum and the efficiency of the training format. The greatest impact was in the following areas:
 - Acquisition of new knowledge about child sexual abuse (average = 4.31)
 - The ideas of choice, power and consciousness as critical elements (avg = 4.44)
 - The potential to change attitudes about child sexual abuse (avg = 4.45)
 - Critical issues for organizations and individuals concerned about the protection of children (avg = 4.27)
 - Perspectives of survivor stories in the videotape (avg = 4.64)
 - Perspectives of professionals and parents in videotape (avg = 4.45)

Findings indicate a significant difference in the increase of knowledge and attitudes. Two months after training, participants experience less than a 10% decrease in knowledge gain and attitude change and show an increase in behaviors aimed at the prevention of sexual abuse. Participants were more likely to:

- Discuss issues of sexual abuse with a child or another adult
- Pay attention to potential signs of sexual abuse
- Drop in unexpectedly to ensure that a child is safe in the care of another adult

Evaluation #5: 2006-2007

Evaluation of the Effectiveness of *Darkness to Light's* Child Sexual Abuse Online Prevention Training.

This **quasi-experimental evaluation** of the *Stewards of Children* prevention program, online version, conducted by the Center for Child and Family Studies of the University of South Carolina, was completed in 2007. This study was funded by a grant from the US Department of Commerce Technology Opportunity Program. Employees and volunteers from youth-serving organizations were the test subjects, with an intervention group of 134 individuals and a comparison group of 84 individuals. Evaluation instruments included a pre-test, post-test, 2-month post test and 6-month post-test.

This evaluation demonstrated that the Stewards of Children curriculum was effective in increasing knowledge, improving attitudes and positively changing adult child-protective behavior over the long-term.

Evaluation #6: 2006 – 2010 (Ongoing)

A Controlled Experimental Study of the Impact of *Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children* Program on Child Care Professionals' Primary and Secondary Prevention Efforts, including Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Reports of Behavior Over Time, As Related to the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse.

This **3-year** study is ongoing. It is funded by the US Centers for Disease Control and is being conducted by Alyssa Rheingold, Ph.D at the National Crime Victim's Research Center at the Medical University of South Carolina. It evaluates, in a **controlled experimental study**, the impact of *Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children* program on childcare professional's primary and secondary prevention efforts, including changes in knowledge, attitudes, and reports of behavior over time, in relation to the prevention of child sexual abuse. This evaluation is also comparing the different modes of presentation (i.e. via web or in person of the *Stewards of Children* program). **Preliminary results show similar increases in knowledge, attitude and behavior as prior evaluations.** The final report is expected in October 2010.

Evaluation #7: 2008 – 2009

A Study of the Impact of *Darkness to Light's Stewards of Children* Program on S.C. Educators, including Changes in Knowledge, Attitudes, and Reports of Behavior Over Time.

This survey of educators taking the *Stewards of Children* prevention program, instructor-led format, conducted by the Center for Child and Family Studies of the University of South Carolina, was completed in 2009. This evaluation project was funded by a US Department of Health and Human Services.

Evaluation methods included a quasi-experimental, counterbalance and matched-question design with multiple data collection points throughout the grant period. Evaluation methods also included quantitative analysis of survey data, as well as qualitative analysis of individual interviews. 830 educators completed a pre-test and post-test. 154 completed a 2-month follow-up.

This survey demonstrated that the Stewards of Children curriculum was effective in increasing knowledge, improving attitudes and positively changing adult child-protective behavior.