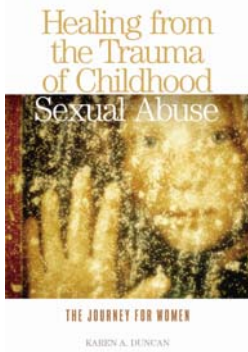


FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Indiana author' provides sexual abuse prevention education to the Indiana Women's Prison.



February 1, 2005 –While encouraging women to speak out about the traumatic crime of sexual abuse, Indiana author, Karen Duncan introduces The Right To Be Safe program at the Indiana's Women Prison.

Duncan is currently at the Indiana Women's Prison as a volunteer presenting The Right To Be Safe Program to women who are incarcerated. This first program began January 6, 2005 and will continue through March. "Bringing this program to women who are in the criminal justice system is one of the ways of stopping the traumatic pathway between child sexual abuse and future violence which places women at-risk for criminal behavior", says Duncan. According to research by the U.S. Department of Justice, the number of women inmates is increasing faster than those of their male counterparts. Among the reasons for this increase are the particular circumstances of the women and girls who become offenders. "Women and girls who end up in the criminal justice system are there as a result of reasons and circumstances distinctly different from those of men. One of these circumstances is the significance of interpersonal trauma, especially sexual abuse, in the lives of women and its causal link to female criminal behavior—violence toward women is a *gender circumstance* that must be considered if justice is to be equal and not blind to the inequities that have long existed for women and girls who have been the victims of criminal acts of violence by partners and family members. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that each year 1 million women in the United States are the victims of violence committed by someone they know and the National Violence Against Women (NVAW) Survey estimates intimate partner violence as even higher. According to the NVAW survey, between 1995 and 1996 1.5 million women were raped and/or physically assaulted by someone they knew in a prior or current intimate relationship. According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation females are more likely to be killed by a spouse or partner than are males; 28.3 percent of women died at the hands of a spouse, boyfriend, or girlfriend compared with 3.6 percent for men. "These are staggering statistics but even more staggering is the realization that these are women who have known personal violence most often by someone they loved and care for and whom they believed loved and cared for them. As is the majority of the time, crimes of violence against women and children are committed by the people closest to them whom they wanted to believe they could trust", says Duncan.

Sexual assault is a problem of similar proportions. The NVAW Survey revealed that 18% of the women surveyed 18 years and older had been the victims of rape or attempted rape. Adolescent girls

between the ages of 16 to 19 are particularly vulnerable. This age group of girls were 3.5 times more likely than the general population to be victims of sexual assault, rape or attempted rape. As is the case with child sexual abuse, rape and sexual assault are crimes acted out by someone known to the woman or adolescent. The Medical University of South Carolina report estimates that 78% of rapes are committed by someone known to the victim. The less recognized violence of sexual harassment, stalking, exploitive involvement in the sex industry, female trafficking and marital rape all have the same story—women and girls suffer and endure these acts of betrayal by the very people whom they believe they can trust.

“The family and intimate violence that women and girls experience sometimes throughout their lives is part of the pathway to women and girls committing criminal behavior”, says Duncan. She cites a 1999 Bureau of Justice Statistics study that reported on the violence committed against women involved in illegal activity. “The study indicated that almost half of all women in jail and prisons had been physically or sexually abused before their imprisonment and that significant rates of drug and alcohol use among women who had been abused and who were in prison occurred during the month before their current offense. These various studies combine to expose and substantiate the traumatic pathway to domestic violence, rape, sexual assault and substance abuse that women and girls experience who are sexually abused in childhood. These reports are not coincidental—sexual abuse during childhood can often lead to being victimized as an adult and criminal behavior by women who use drugs and alcohol is closely linked to this pattern of victimization.

“The use of illegal substances and alcohol are a part of the victimization pattern linked with illegal behavior by women and girls because drugs and/or alcohol help mediate the effects of sexual abuse—alcohol can numb the emotional pain of the abuse and drugs can help escape the memories of it. The substance use that arises from sexual trauma also places women at risk for further violence—they are often with men who deal the drugs and who provide easy access to these drugs that women use, but these same men also place women in the pathway of illegal activity—dealing and using occur together and women are going to be at-risk for being in a place where illegal activities occur or committing crimes because they are coerced or threatened by their (violent) partners or to support an addictive habit, and when women are where illegal activity is occurring they are going to be arrested”, explains Duncan.

Duncan’s goal is to assist the criminal justice system to steadily integrate prevention education with trauma treatment for adult women and female adolescents while they are in the criminal justice system. The Indiana Women’s Prison under the leadership of Dana Blank has already started laying the foundation for Duncan’s work by recognizing the traumatic pathway between childhood abuse, adult violence and criminal behavior by women and girls. “If we can bring this type of prevention information to women while they are incarcerated, we increase the likelihood of breaking this long-standing cycle of violence for women and decreasing the likelihood of them returning to the criminal behavior that brought them to the doors of the

criminal justice system. Another important outcome of prevention education integrated with trauma treatment is that we also have the opportunity to prevent the children of incarcerated women from experiencing a lifetime of violence. The next generation is then instilled with the hope and reality of a different way of experiencing family relationships that is absent of violence” shares Duncan.

Karen A. Duncan, M.A., LMFT, LSW is a licensed therapist, author, writer and lecturer with more than 19 years of experience working with women, children and families to restore their lives and heal from child sexual abuse. She is a graduate of Ball State University where she received Master of Arts Degree in Clinical Psychology and completed her undergraduate training at Elmhurst College in Chicago. As an Adjunct Professor she has taught psychology and women’s studies at the university level. She is national speaker at conferences and has delivered training for organizations in the United States. Duncan’s new book *Healing from the Trauma of Childhood Sexual Abuse: The Journey for Women* released by Praeger Publishing: Connecticut (2004) 230 pages, ISBN 0-275-98084-7, \$39.95 can be purchased through her web-site at www.healing4women.com or at Barnes and Noble.com & Amazon.com as well at the publisher’s web-site. Duncan lives in Greenwood, Indiana where she has her private practice as a licensed therapist and clinical educator.