Director’s Message

According to CDC, homicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 10-24 years. In 2008, more than 656,000 young people aged 10-24 years were treated in emergency departments for injuries sustained from violence. In 2009, 20% of students throughout the U.S. indicated that they had been bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey and during the 2007-2008 academic year, 26% of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students on a daily or weekly basis, with middle schools reporting the highest occurrence of regular bullying.

In 2008, there were approximately 1.2 million victims of nonfatal crimes at school in the United States. During the 2007-08 school year, 75 percent of public schools recorded one or more violent incidents of crime, and 17 percent recorded one or more serious violent incidents.

Violence among youth as victims and as perpetrators is a serious public health problem in the United States. In this issue of the CICRC newsletter you will read about work that is being done under the auspices of the Center to better understand and to address this public health issue.

International Update

During the week of July 17-July 22, the 5th USA-China Agricultural Injury Prevention Research Training was held in Hangzhou China. Twenty-three Chinese scholars attended the four day training session.

The training culminated in a conference where 70 trainees involved in the program over the previous four years shared results from the research projects they have been conducting on agricultural injuries.

This was the final training session of the five year Fogarty International Center funded project that was a highly successful partnership between the Colorado Injury Control Research Center, the Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Research Institute of Nationwide Children’s Hospital, and the School of Public Health of Tongji Medical College.
Kim Henry, PhD is a Research Associate at the Colorado Injury Control Research Center. She focuses on several violence-related research topics, including school violence, child maltreatment, and intimate partner violence.

Along with Dr. Lorann Stallones and Janna West-Kowalski, Kim recently completed a grant application focused on anti-bullying policy that will be submitted with the CICRC center grant renewal. More work to identify effective methods to prevent bullying is needed because bullying is one of the most common forms of school violence (Robers et al., 2010).

In 2009, 20% of students indicated that they had been bullied on school property in the 12 months preceding the survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2010) and during the 2007-2008 academic year, 26% of public schools reported that bullying occurred among students on a daily or weekly basis, with middle schools reporting the highest occurrence of regular bullying (U.S. Department of Education, 2008).

In a study that was recently accepted for publication by the Journal of School Violence (Lovegrove, Henry, & Slater, in press), Kim and her colleagues utilized latent class analysis to define typologies of bullying and victimization behaviors among middle school students. Four classes emerged: victims of bullying (15% of the sample); bullies (12% of the sample); bully-victims – i.e., students who both bully and are victims of bullying (13% of the sample); and noninvolved – i.e., students who don’t bully and aren’t victims of bullying (39% of the sample).

This study clearly demonstrates that a substantial portion of middle school students are involved in bullying behaviors as either perpetrators or victims. This is a critical problem because bullying is associated with numerous short and long term deleterious effects, including emotional distress, bodily injury, suicide, and homicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Indeed, bullying is far too prevalent, particularly among middle school students, and initiatives aimed at preventing and reducing bullying are needed.

One potential method for increasing the uptake of evidence-based programs and practices by schools is through enactment of legislation. Over the past two decades, most states have developed statutes that address bullying, harassment and hazing (Olweus Bully Prevention Program, 2011). Many of the statutes direct school districts to develop policies to prevent bullying and harassment in schools. However, the extent to which the enactment of these statutes has resulted in the adoption of policies by school districts is not well known.

Research is needed to determine if school districts have adopted and successfully implemented policies and if these policies have resulted in the uptake of evidence-based programs and practices to prevent bullying. An improved understanding of the current policies in school districts, as well as the bully-prevention programs and practices implemented in schools, may help inform policy makers and injury prevention professionals on how to increase adoption of evidence based programs and practices that may ultimately reduce bullying behaviors.

The goal of the CICRC study proposed by Kim and her colleagues is to gain an understanding of the influence of anti-bullying legislation on the uptake of evidence-based programs, practices, and policies to prevent bullying and associated school violence by middle schools in the Rocky Mountain Region. The results of the proposed study will offer important new information about the best methods for successful anti-bullying policy adoption and implementation by middle schools.

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Focus on a Community Partner:  
Tony Grampsas Youth Services

The Tony Grampsas Youth Services (TGYS) Program provides funding to community-based organizations that serve children, youth and their families with services designed to reduce youth crime and violence and to prevent child abuse and neglect. TGYS embraces a positive youth development approach which values the experiences, backgrounds, talents, and contributions of the children, youth, and families they serve. TGYS encourages funded agencies to integrate an assets-based philosophy into their programs, services, and organizations.

The TGYS program assumes that all children and youth have the potential to become healthy, fulfilled, and productive citizens of Colorado given the proper support and guidance from caring adults, organizations, and communities. TGYS is housed in the Injury, Suicide and Violence Prevention Unit in the Prevention Services Division at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment.

TGYS grants out approximately $3.2 million dollars annually. In 2011/2012, TGYS dollars are funding 29 agencies located in 55 of Colorado’s 64 counties. Eligible entities include non-profit organizations, local governments, schools, and faith-based organizations. TGYS focuses on funding the following types of programs: early childhood, before and after school programs, restorative justice, mentoring, student dropout prevention, and general violence prevention.

As an example, TGYS is currently funding Metro Denver Partners’ Gang Reconciliation and Support Project (GRASP) which is a peer-run, intervention program that works with youth who are at-risk of gang involvement or are presently active in gangs, helps families of gang victims, and serves as a youth advocate. TGYS funds projects every three years, and applications will be accepted again in 2014.

In 2009, the Safety Management Applied Resource Team (SMART) at Colorado State University (CSU) began serving as the program evaluator for the TGYS program. Julie Gibbs, Associate Director for Community Programs at the Colorado Injury Control Research Center (CICRC), serves as the Project Coordinator for the TGYS project.

CSU’s SMART team provides technical assistance with data collection and analysis, and works with all TGYS grantees to: 1) help them address their own unique evaluation challenges, 2) disseminate lessons learned and best practices, and 3) help them create sustainable evaluation plans.

Rose Barcklow, TGYS Program Director, explains that “Good data is important to us because we need to prove that TGYS is effective.” CSU is able to provide program evaluation results in a form that everyone from legislatures to parents can understand. Ultimately, providing this evaluation support allows agencies to show their effectiveness and reduce violence in the communities they serve.

For more information about TGYS, please visit their website at http://www.cdphe.state.co.us/ps/tgys/index.html.

For more information about CSU’s Safety Management Applied Resource Team, please visit their website at http://csuohp.org/.
Focus on a Research Associate: Interview with Thao Le

Thao Le, PhD, MPH, received her Masters in Public Health (MPH) from the University of California at Berkeley, and PhD in psychology at the University of California at UC Davis. She was assistant professor at Colorado State University, in the Human Development and Family Studies Department, before joining the Family & Consumer Sciences Department at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Fall 2011.

A refugee of the Vietnam War (in fact, as a child, she was on one of the last Chinook helicopters that left the US Embassy’s roof in Saigon on April 29, 1975), she has always been personally intrigued and interested in the process of immigration and acculturation, and its effect on individual development and family processes. Influenced by her father’s military and law enforcement background, her research interests eventually migrated to include youth delinquency and youth violence.

Prior to joining academia, she worked 10 years at a non-profit, think tank agency called the National Council on Crime and Delinquency, where she helped to develop a Center (the Asian Pacific Islander Youth Violence Prevention Center, followed by Center on Culture, Immigration, and Youth Violence Prevention, both funded by the CDC) that examined risks and protective factors for delinquency among the various Asian and Pacific Islander subgroups.

Her research revealed how acculturative stress, acculturative dissonance (the varying rates of acculturation experienced by youth vs. parents including changes in beliefs, attitudes, and practices), ethnic identity, values (individualism/collectivism), among other factors influenced youth’s engagement in delinquent behavior including arrest and incarceration. Interestingly, as similarly observed in other immigrant/ethnic groups, becoming more “American” was a risk factor with respect to delinquency; second generation Asians were more likely than their first generation counterparts to engage in delinquent behaviors, and this was true across the varied Southeast Asian subgroups (Cambodian, Laotian/Mien, Vietnamese).

Her work in basic social science research naturally transitioned to the applied side as she became more interested in the translational aspects. She collaborated with a non-profit, community-based agency in the bay area to investigate the role of multiculturalism (openness, respect, and appreciation of diverse cultures and cultural perspectives) on delinquency.

In this study, she was interested in examining whether an afterschool program that encourages youth from different cultures, different ethnicities, to come together and tackle tasks and activities collectively, matters in terms of reducing aggressive and delinquent behaviors. Although the evidence was inconclusive, it led her to seek funding from CICRC, to explore how youth perceive and experience multiculturalism, a more qualitative, embodied, phenomenological perspective.

With pilot funding from CICRC, she and her graduate student conducted a photovoice project where they handed out cellphones and asked youth from three different geographical locations (Bay Area, Loveland/Fort Collins, South Bronx) to take pictures as visual representation of what multiculturalism and its relation to youth violence meant to them. Focus groups and one-on-one interviews were conducted with the youth, and the results were analyzed using a thematic approach. The manuscript is currently under review. Thao continues to be actively engaged in CICRC’s work, and is intimately involved in CICRC’s dissemination activities.

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Since 1997, The Child Advocacy Center (CAC) has been working to reduce trauma to children and their families in Larimer County, Colorado through a comprehensive response to child abuse that focuses on prevention and education. In 2007, the CICRC joined the CAC’s efforts by becoming a member of their Committee for Child Abuse Prevention Education. This committee consists of a wide range of individuals representing disciplines across the county, including: CAC board members, school district personnel, child psychiatrists, child advocacy physicians, child therapists, child forensic interviewers and CAC volunteers.

Initially, the CICRC began working with the committee to develop an achievable and measurable action plan for the selection and implementation of an educational prevention curriculum. This helped guide the committee’s activities, and resulted in the CAC adopting the Talking about Touching (TAT) evidence-based curriculum. In this curriculum, TAT facilitators meet with individual classrooms once a week for 4-5 weeks depending on the grade level.

Students are taught about general safety rules, such as fire and seat belt safety, during the first weeks of the class. Eventually, conversation turns to what are safe/unsafe touches and what to do if they get an unsafe touch. Additionally, students learn steps to take if someone touches their private body parts: saying “No”, getting away, and telling an adult.

With funding support through the CICRC’s Community Initiated Small Grants program, the curriculum was pilot tested in the Poudre School District. During this pilot period, over 500 children received the training which was complimented by educational sessions for over 100 school staff members and parents.

Next, the CICRC funded the evaluation of the TAT curriculum which was conducted by the Social Work Research Center at Colorado State University. The objective of the evaluation was to assess the knowledge gain attained by students who participated in the sexual abuse prevention program. The program evaluation was completed in April of 2010, and it found that the TAT curriculum is useful in teaching second and third grade children about sexual abuse prevention. Specifically, the program appears to be helpful in increasing second and third grade student’s knowledge of sexual abuse prevention strategies.

Today, over 3,000 students have participated in the program, and the CAC expects growth for the 2011-2012 school year. This effort was made possible through the collaborative efforts of the CAC Board of Directors, the CAC Committee for the Child Abuse Prevention Education, the CICRC, CSU-Social Work Research Center, Corporate Sponsors, and an outstanding pool of classroom facilitators.

For more information about the CAC, please visit their website at http://www.larimercac.org/.

To learn more about the Talking About Touching curriculum visit http://www.cfchildren.org/programs/tat/overview/.