PREA ANNUAL REPORT – 2020

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA)

The Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) is a national law passed by Congress and signed by President George W. Bush in 2003. PREA establishes national standards for the detection, prevention, and response to sexual misconduct in federal, state, and local correctional confinement facilities. The act mandates correctional agencies and programs to establish a zero-tolerance policy, increase accountability of administrators, and implement methods to ensure compliance with PREA standards. In 2012, the Department of Justice (DOJ) passed additional standards that would aid in the elimination of sexual assault in confinement facilities. Those standards inform the information provided in this annual report in addition to the overview provided on the program website.

Working on Womanhood's (WOW) PREA Policy & Procedure

The WOW program is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for youth and staff, and continuously implements practices and procedures to ensure safety. The program complies with the Alabama Department of Youth Services (DYS) zero tolerance PREA policy and the University of Alabama Child Abuse and Neglect policy. The program has established program procedures and administrative guidelines to adhere to the policies. All PREA allegations are reviewed and investigated expeditiously, and appropriate steps are taken to protect youth. Additionally, findings and potential contributing factors for allegations are utilized to further enhance programmatic response.

Administrative PREA Allegations

Applying the definitions established by the Department of Justice (DOJ), the WOW program ensures investigations are conducted for all PREA related allegations. The administrative investigative process includes a preliminary investigation or full investigation process. A preliminary investigation is a process facilitated to determine if a full investigation is warranted. Generally conducted by the PREA Coordinator – who is also a trained investigator, preliminary investigations may include a one (1) to two (2) day review of relevant documentation, consultation with program administration and investigator(s), and brief review of surveillance recordings when applicable. This preliminary review determines if a full investigation is warranted. Allegations referred for a full investigation are assigned to an investigator, and the process is allotted thirty (30) days for completion – extensions are granted based on the circumstances of the allegation. The full investigation includes interviews with individuals pertinent to an allegation, extended review of relevant surveillance recordings, review of all

documentation connected with the allegation, and consultation with program administration, therapists, and medical staff as deemed necessary.

All allegations, regardless of the determination, are assessed by the program PREA Response Team to discuss any areas of improvement and program response. Methods for corrective action and improvements are discussed and undertaken on an ongoing basis. Such actions include updates to staff and youth PREA training, programming protocol changes, facility surveillance enhancements, additional supervision exceeding the 1:4 and 1:6 staffing ratio.

In 2020, there was one substantiated allegation of sexual harassment. There were no substantiated allegations of sexual abuse, in 2020. This data remains level with the allegations received in 2019, which was also zero, in regards to sexual abuse.

Criminal PREA Investigations

The Tuscaloosa County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) has jurisdiction to investigate criminal complaints at the WOW Program, including sexual assault. It is the policy and procedure of the WOW Program that, upon a reasonable suspicion that a PREA-related crime has been committed, WOW will immediately contact TCSO, will cooperate fully in the investigation, and will follow all TCSO directives.

DOJ Audits

In compliance with the Department of Justice (DOJ) PREA mandates, program audits were conducted in 2014, 2017, and 2020 by a DOJ certified PREA auditor to assess WOW's adherence to PREA standards. The program was found compliant for both years and exceeded expectations on several PREA standards. The next audit will take place in 2023 and the audit reports are accessible on the program website. WOW will continue to implement practices to comply with PREA guidelines and work diligently to continue exceeding standards.

Additional Information

This annual report has been reviewed and approved by the YSI Director. For further PREA-related data and/or information, email the Youth Services Institute office at ysi@ua.edu.