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New Approach for Preventing Sexual Violence among College Students

By

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WHITE PLAINS, N.Y., May 5, 2015 /PRNewswire/ -- One in five college students experiences sexual assault during their college career, and a New York-based health and wellness company is working to help change that. National Health Promotion Associates (NHPA) has been awarded a grant from the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to develop and evaluate an effective approach to preventing sexual violence. This new program for incoming college students will be based on the science of the *Botvin Life Skills Training* (LST) program. LST has been tested in over 30 peer-reviewed studies and proven to dramatically cut teen alcohol, drug abuse, and violence—in some cases by as much as 80%. These studies show that the LST program yields reductions in excessive alcohol use, illicit drug use, and violence with different populations, providers, and delivery formats. The studies also show that the effects are long-lasting, with evidence of prevention effects lasting well into young adulthood.

The new sexual violence prevention program will take a holistic approach. Students will learn important life skills for handling the challenges of everyday college life, enhancing the development of general personal and social competence, and increasing overall resilience.

"We are excited about receiving this funding from NIH, and look forward to this opportunity to develop and test an innovative program that will stop sexual violence before it ever begins," said Dr. Gilbert J. Botvin, developer of the *LifeSkills Training* program, professor emeritus of Cornell University's Weill Medical College, and president of NHPA. "Since sexual violence often occurs while people are under the influence of alcohol or drugs, it is important that prevention programs focus on alcohol and drug abuse as well as sexual violence."

During the first phase of this NIH-funded project, researchers will develop and test sample materials for the new program to determine their relevance, utility, and appeal among college students, faculty, and administrators. The resulting data will guide the development of the full program and test its effectiveness in a large-scale national study involving 40 college campuses.

Dr. Kenneth Griffin, Senior Research Scientist at NHPA and director of the team developing the new program, added that "this new program will use a series of interactive web-based and face-to-face learning activities to change social norms surrounding alcohol/drug abuse and sexual violence, train bystanders to recognize and respond to high-risk situations, and help college students develop the kind of skills that lead to healthy relationships."

Established in 1985, National Health Promotion Associates (NHPA) is a dynamic health and wellness firm located in White Plains, New York. Dedicated to promoting behavioral health, NHPA focuses on developing, evaluating, and providing training to educators and health professionals on a range of health and wellness programs. An area of particular interest relates to the prevention of health risk behaviors among adolescents and young adults, including substance abuse, violence, bullying, and sexual violence. For more information visit: www.lifeskillstraining.com.

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Dr. Kenneth W. Griffin holds a Ph.D. from the State University of New York (Stony Brook) and an MPH from Columbia University. Dr. Griffin is currently a senior research scientist at NHPA and an adjunct professor of healthcare policy and research at Cornell University's Weill Medical College in New York City.

To view the original version on PR Newswire, visit:<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/new-approach-for-preventing-sexual-violence-among-college-students-300077251.html>

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