

## **Building Staff and Youth Capacity to Address Sexual Violence against Youth in Custody**

Many youth enter the justice system because of pervasive histories of sexual abuse, generally at the hands of people they know, and often trust. This is particularly true for GLBTQQ youth. Those histories leave them very vulnerable to abuse once in the juvenile system, both at the hands of staff and other youth. The explicit mission of juvenile agencies is rehabilitation. Because of this and mandatory reporting laws, juvenile agencies are more likely than adult agencies to take complaints of abuse seriously.

The goal of the proposed project is to reduce and prevent sexual violence against youth in custodial settings. To accomplish this goal the Project on Addressing Prison Rape plans to develop curricula and pilot a staff and youth peer led training program in three states, two of which will be Texas and the District of Columbia.

The Project will: (1) meet with stakeholders-- youth, advocates and agency officials-- in each state to gain support for the project and to identify their need for information and services related to addressing sexuality and sexual violence in custodial settings; (2) develop a training program for staff and youth in an effort to build their capacity to deal with issues of sexuality and sexual violence against youth in custody; (3) develop and support a cadre of youth and staff trainers; and (4) publish materials-- training curricula and youth handbook on adolescent development, sexual development, and identifying and addressing sexual violence in custody. The Project believes this approach builds capacity and investment among staff, youth, agencies and advocacy organizations. It also allows youth to have a continuing voice in identifying issues and in developing approaches and models to sexuality and sexual violence in custodial settings that resonate with them.

The Project anticipates the following outcomes: (1) reduced sexual violence against youth in custody; (2) increased reporting of sexual violence against youth in custody; (3) increased and varied responses to youth sexuality in custody; (4) increased and appropriate responses to sexual violence against youth in custody; (5) increased knowledge of adolescent development and sexuality among staff and youth; and improved sexual decision-making by youth.