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# **The Prevention of Violence through Elementary School Child Abuse Prevention Education**

**Crystal Sisson, Lead Prevention Educator, Holly's  
House**

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# A Brief History

Holly's House is a non-residential, child and adult victim advocacy center.

Our mission is to empower victims of intimate crime and abuse by providing support, promoting justice and preventing violence.



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## In today's world...

- **1 in 10** children are sexually abused before the age of 18. (Darkness to Light, 2013)
  - **The most common ages** of children when sexual abuse occurs are **between ages 8 and 12** years old. (David Finkelhor et al, A Sourcebook on Child Sexual Abuse)
  - **More than 90%** of all sexual abuse victims **know their abuser**. Over 50% of the offenders are household members, & 38% are already acquaintances of the victims. (US Department of Justice & Holly's House Interview Data)
  - **80%** of sexual assaults **occur at home**; 49% in broad daylight. (Sexual Assault Care Centre, 1999, Myths & Facts About Sexual Assault)
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# Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Physical abuse
  - Sexual abuse
  - Emotional abuse
  - Physical neglect
  - Emotional neglect
  - Mother treated violently
  - Substance misuse within household
  - Household mental illness
  - Parental separation or divorce
  - Incarcerated household member
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## **ACEs has a significant influence on:**

- child and adolescent behavioral health
  - teen pregnancy
  - substance abuse
  - sexual behavior
  - mental health
  - risk of revictimization
  - stability of relationships
  - performance in the workforce
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## **ACEs increase the risk of:**

- Heart disease
  - Chronic Lung disease
  - Liver disease
  - Suicide
  - Injuries
  - HIV and STDs
  - Cancer
  - Mental Illness
  - Obesity
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**45%** of those who experienced  
childhood sexual abuse had two adults in  
home who abused alcohol.

**(The Health and Social Impact of Growing Up With Alcohol Abuse and Related Adverse Childhood Experiences: The Human and Economic Costs of the Status Quo, Robert Anda, MD, MS)**

# What is Prevention?

**Primary – Secondary - Tertiary**

- **Prevention** consists of methods or activities that seek to reduce or deter specific or predictable problems, protect the current state of well-being, or promote desired outcomes or behaviors.
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## Why Prevention?

- **Over 64% of Holly's House forensic interviews completed were with children between the ages of 6 and 12.**
  - Very few of the elementary schools in our area were offering child abuse prevention information to students and **there was not a consistent approach or message** for those who did offer it.
  - Search began for a comprehensive, research/evidence- based program to address this need in our community prior to selecting Child Lures Prevention's "Think First and Stay Safe" Program in the Fall of 2009.
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## School Based Prevention in Indiana

- Advocacy centers, catholic dioceses and child welfare organizations
  - 2012- Erin's Law passed to provide prevention education to grades 2<sup>nd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>
  - 2018-SB 355 expanded child abuse prevention education in grades K-12 and increased training for teachers and school staff on reporting
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## Prevention in SW Indiana

- **Lampion Center**
    - **“Stewards of Children”**  
Nationally recognized, evidence-informed program
    - Geared toward agencies who provide services to children within the community
    - Provides training to prevent, report, and detect child abuse
  - **Albion Fellows Bacon Center**
    - **“Safe Dates”** Nationally recognized, evidence-based program
    - Middle and High School students
    - Provides skills on how to build healthy relationships and how to recognize unhealthy situations
  - **“Coaching Boys to Men”**  
Nationally recognized, evidence-based program
  - Coaches are trained to implement themes directed toward athletes at any age level
  - Promotes respectful behavior among players & prevent abuse, harassment, and sexual assault
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## **What is Think First & Stay Safe?**

- Evidence and researched based prevention program developed by Child Lures Prevention
  - Week-long program, 30-45 minute sessions for grades K-6th.
  - Focus on overall personal safety including child physical and sexual abuse, bullying, and internet safety.
  - Age-appropriate lessons in classroom based environment ideal for learning seven core concepts.
  - Emphasis on teaching children about the common predatory behaviors.
  - Includes parent resources and teen companion program.
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## What's the ideal approach?

- Student Programming
    - Evidence-based curriculum
    - Multiple sessions/exposure
    - Consistent messages
    - Practice skills learned and allows discussion
    - Uses relevant examples
    - Empowers students
  - Parent Resources
    - Encourages continued dialogue
    - Provides updated information
    - Gives examples of scenarios
    - Reporting information and tips
    - Multiple age levels addressed
    - Includes internet safety
  - Community Engagement
    - Provide information on mandated reporting
    - List of community resources
    - Policies and Procedures for youth serving organizations
    - Warning signs of abuse and predatory behaviors
    - Social norms change
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## **The Spectrum of Prevention**

Influencing Policy & Legislation

Changing Organizational Practices

Fostering Coalitions & Networks

Educating Providers

Promoting Community Education

Strengthening Individual Knowledge & Skills



**Think First & Stay Safe In Action**

# Milestones for Prevention

**2010**

Began serving schools through “Think First & Stay Safe” program, focusing on services in one county

**2011**

Hired first staff person whose time was dedicated exclusively to this program

**2012**

Indiana began requiring sexual abuse prevention programming for all students in 2nd through 5th grade

**2014**

Expanded to our fifth county and added a three-quarters time employee in addition to full-time Prevention Educator

**2016**

Added an additional part-time Prevention Educator resulting in three staff members

**2018**

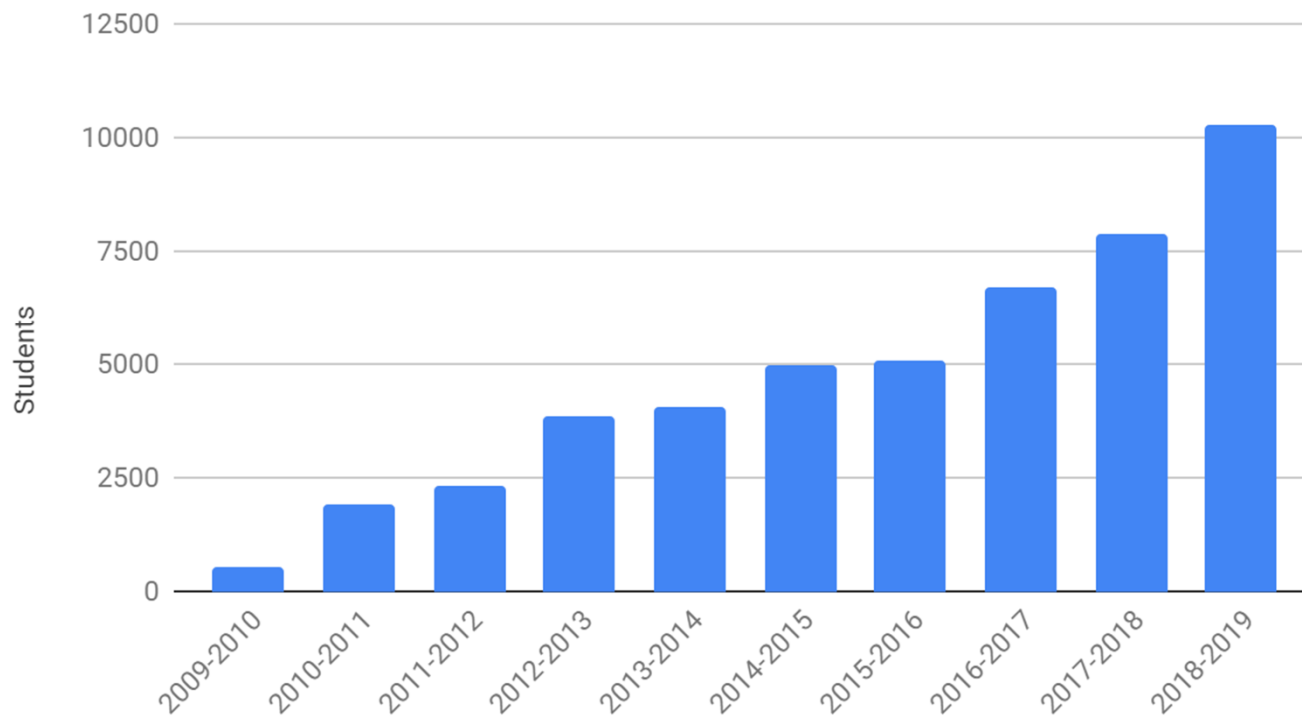
Indiana passes SB 355 requiring evidence-based prevention education for all K-12 students and increased training for teachers on reporting child abuse

**2019**

Increased to five prevention staff, serving 98% of public and private schools in 5 counties. Program in at least 2 grade levels in each school. Reached 50,000 children since program inception.

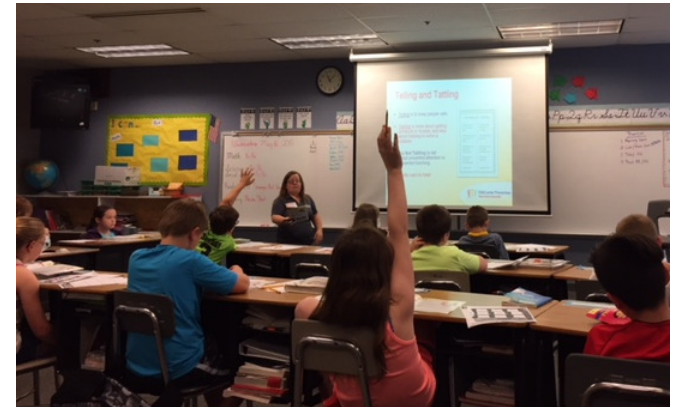


## Students



# School Partnerships

- Promotion of program through teachers and administrators in both public and private schools
- The program is offered as series of two day or five day presentations with each class
- Effectiveness is increased when students receive the program at multiple grade levels
- Provide educator training for state reporting requirements and tips for best practices in responding to children who disclose abuse



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## **Community Partnerships**

Effective prevention is a community-wide effort.

- Albion Fellows Bacon Center
  - Lampion Center
  - County Prosecutor's Office
  - Schools
  - Local Churches
  - Youth Serving Organizations
  - Businesses
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# What teachers are saying...

**"The greatest strength of this program is the overall message that abuse can be prevented."**

- 3rd Grade Teacher

**"If one child is safer in life, your program has done its job!"**

- 3rd Grade Teacher

**"As a teacher, I do not deal with these situations on a daily basis. I liked that the presenter was experienced in this area."**

- 2nd Grade Teacher

## What people are saying...

**“You are a large part of our much needed school cultural change.”**

**-School Administrator**

**“A little education and they find their voice.”**

**-School Counselor**

**“My only complaint is that the program only lasts one week! I wish you could come back and teach us more!”**

**-3rd grade student**

**Outcomes**

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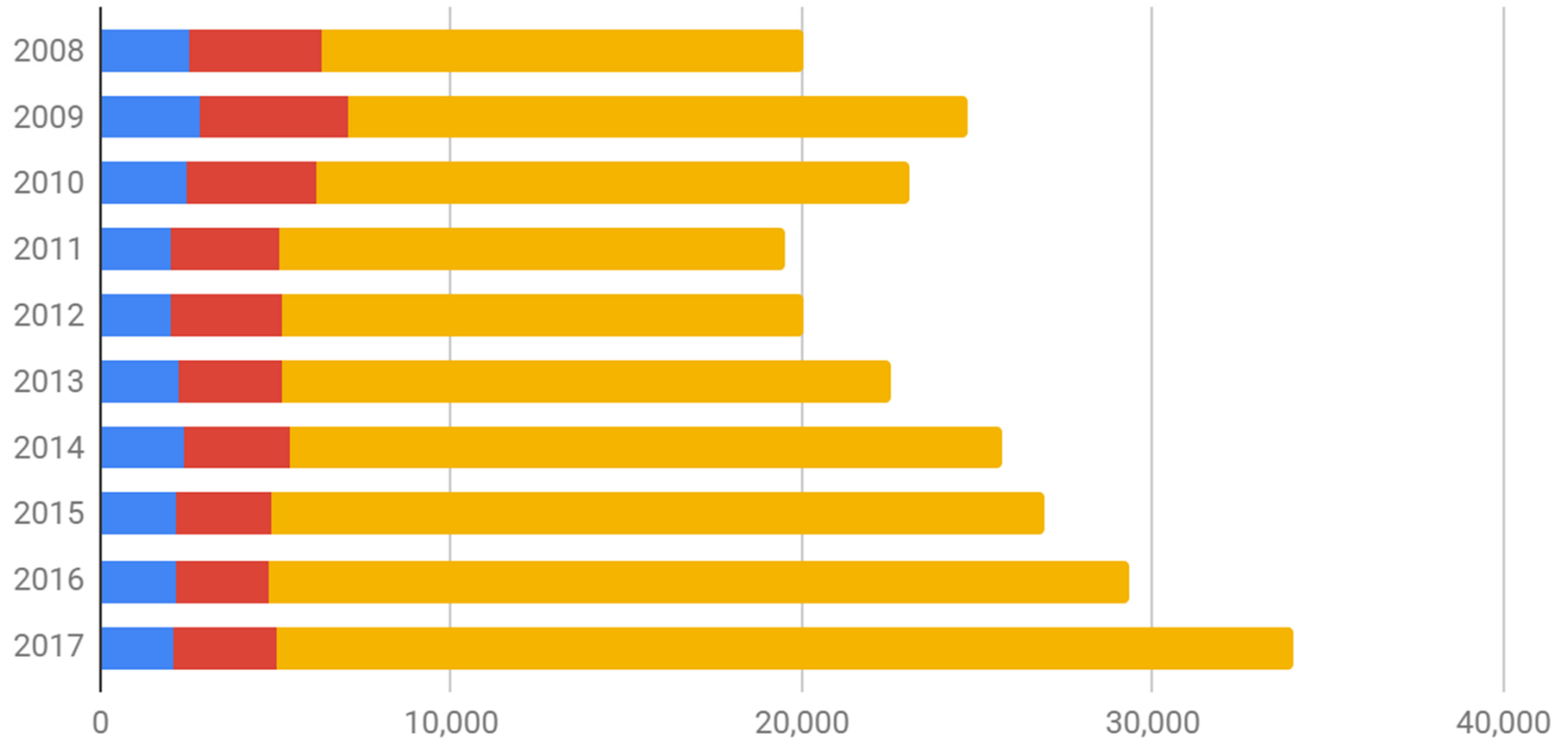
## **Today**

**Holly's House has taught 49,960 students in 2,300 classrooms throughout five counties in Southwestern Indiana.**

- 98% of the 72 area elementary schools have hosted "Think First & Stay Safe" in at least one of their classrooms.
  - Interviews with 5-12 year olds has dropped by 14%.
  - One county has seen a 34% decrease in SA cases.
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# Physical, Sexual and Neglect

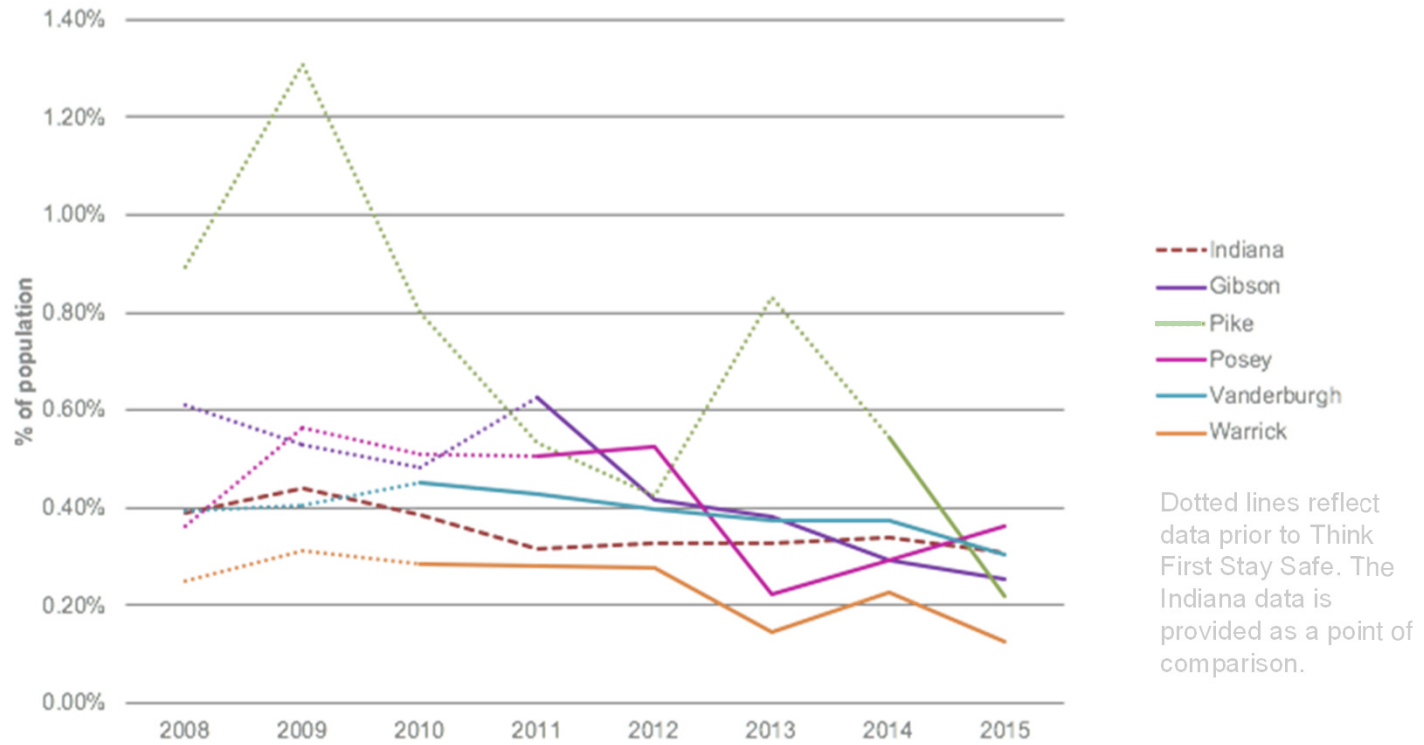
Physical Sexual Neglect





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## Substantiated Physical & Sexual Child Abuse Cases

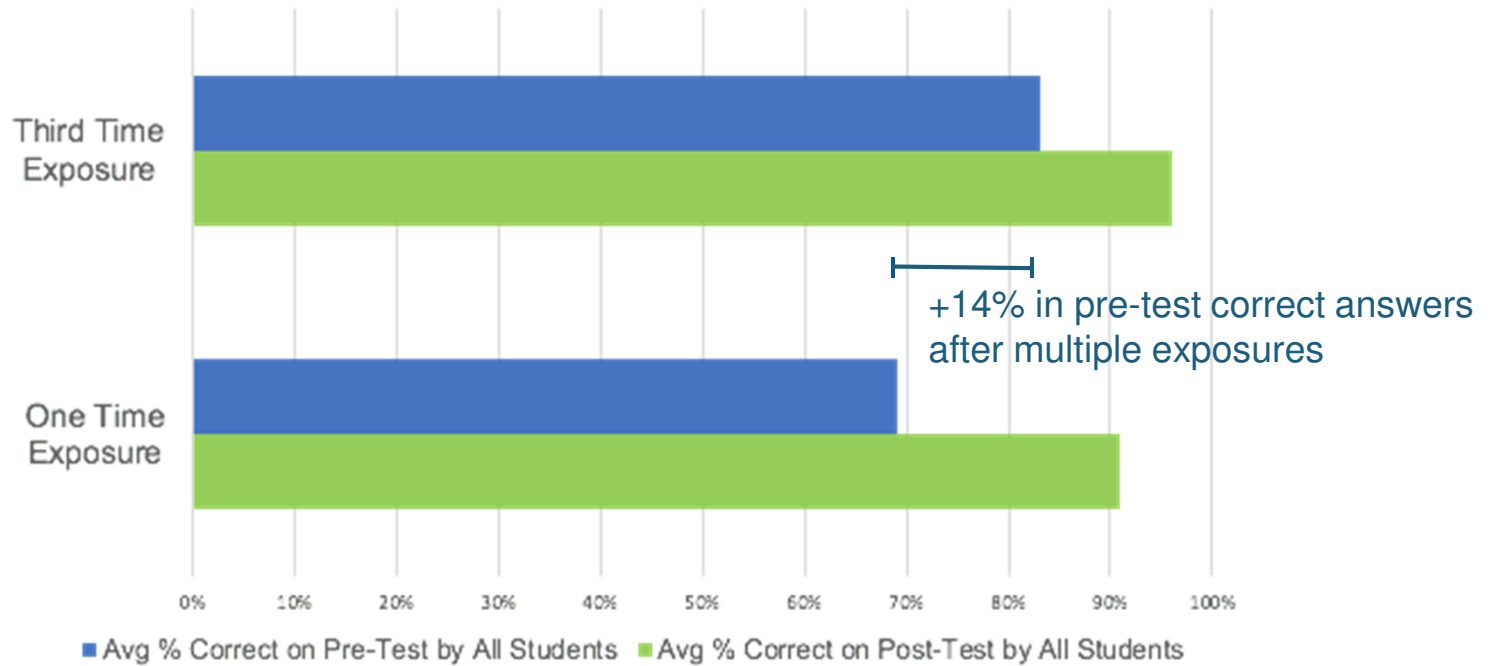


## Average Percentage of Change Between Pre/Post Test

	2011-2012	2012-2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
<b>Kindergarten</b>		19.1%	16.0%	21.0%	29.0%	32.0%	21.1%
<b>K-2nd Grade</b>	28.8%	28.3%					
<b>1st - 2nd Grade</b>			30.6%	30.0%	31.0%	27.6%	27.5%
<b>3rd - 4th Grade</b>	6.1%	20.3%	20.4%	19.3%	20.0%	16.3%	15.6%
<b>5th - 6th Grade</b>	12.4%	21.2%	20.6%	16.9%	19.1%	19.0%	15.9%
			Test updated				Test updated

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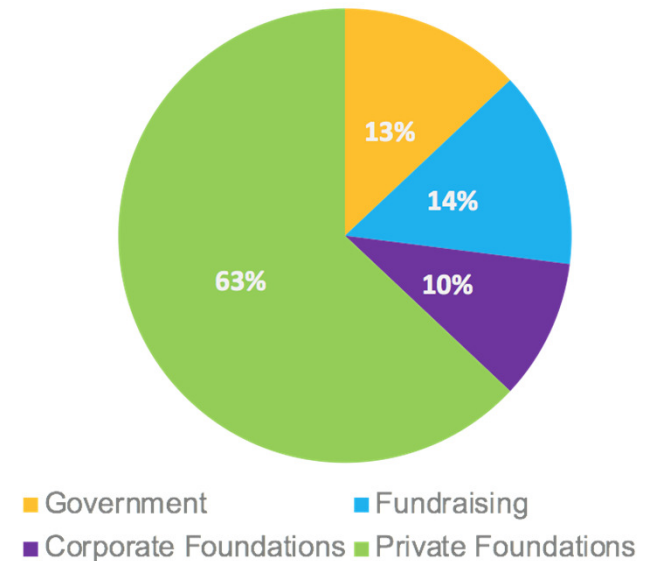
## Sample of 5th Grade Students: Comparing One Exposure vs. Multiple Exposure



**Funding**

- Private foundation grants provided the seed money to purchase the curriculum and start the program
- Private and community foundations have provided the vast majority of funding to sustain the program
- State funding is through Department of Child Services under their Community Partners for Prevention Initiatives
- Local Business
- Private Donations
- Events

## Program Income Sources: 2010-2017



**What's Next?**

## **What's Next?**

- Continue to expand reach within community
- Increase funding to ensure programs can be fully implemented
- Provide training on reporting and understanding dynamics of abuse
- Help Youth Serving organizations create safe environments and strong policies for protection
- Research on correlation between prevention, disclosures, and child abuse rates

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## **In Conclusion**

- Public health approach
- Safety is an ongoing conversation
- Impact on community and society

For further information, contact:

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