

Senator Schumer will visit Alfred University's Rural Justice Institute March 19

3/15/04

Sen. Charles Schumer, D-New York, will be in Alfred, Friday, March 19, for an update on the progress being made by the Rural Justice Institute at Alfred University. Senator Schumer is expected to arrive at the Lea R. Powell Institute for Children and Family Services, located at 6 Sayles Street, Alfred, about 3:30 p.m. and will spend approximately an hour touring the facilities and talking to those involved with the Rural Justice Institute. With more than \$1million in federal funding from the Department of Justice, Alfred University and the other partners in the Rural Justice Institute, which include representatives from the court system, law enforcement, school districts, and social services and health care providers, have created a network designed to improve the ways in which problems of domestic violence are addressed in rural areas. Often, cases of domestic violence in rural areas go unreported and unresolved, the agencies have found. Victims of domestic violence in rural areas lack necessary avenues to escape or get help. Through the Rural Justice Institute, the agencies are working on improved response rate when domestic violence is reported or suspected and on developing links among agencies to better detect victims of abuse. In addition to administering the Rural Justice Institute, Alfred University, through the Powell Child and Family Services Institute, is trying to find ways to help the youngest victims of abuse: the children. Too often in the past, the criminal, health care and social services agencies have concentrated on the most obvious victim - generally an adult - who has been abused by his or her domestic partner, yet often the children are victims, too, particularly emotionally if they have seen a parent physically assaulted or mentally abused. And they are more likely to themselves grow up to be involved in abusive situations. Alfred University faculty and students in AU's doctoral program in School Psychology work with the at-risk youth to help them escape the abusive environment and change their attitudes toward relationships. Additionally, they are developing training programs for personnel in area school systems and social services agencies so they identify children who may be in abusive environments and get them the help they need.