

## **Rural Justice Institute to host conference aimed at helping at-risk youth**

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ALFRED, NY The Alfred University Rural Justice Institute has organized a conference this month for youth service providers. The conference "Crystal Opportunities: Building Resiliency in Youth At-Risk" will be held at the Radisson hotel in Corning, NY, May 18-20. The conference is co-sponsored by the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Allegany Council on Alcoholism and Substance Abuse. Its goal is to provide participants with a multidisciplinary approach to programs and resources for developing resilient youth. The conference will address treatment options, service coordination, and intervention and prevention programs. It is designed for anyone who works with youth, including professionals from criminal justice and law enforcement; human services; medical and health services; education and research; mental health; addiction treatment; clergy and church groups. "The objective is to bring people together in one place, where they can learn about different prevention programs and different ways to help kids," said Hannah Young, director of operations for the Rural Justice Institute. "By getting people together, there are opportunities to network and learn how to better coordinate services." Keynote speaker for the conference will be Dr. James Garbarino, an internationally recognized expert in child abuse issues, youth violence, education and families. His address, titled "Resilience on a Socially Toxic Environment," will discuss social factors that can negatively impact the development of youth and how professionals and parents can identify and address them, allowing youngsters to focus on positive influences. The keynote address will be presented Thursday, May 19. Garbarino is the Elizabeth Lee Vincent Professor of Human Development, Cornell University and is the former Co-Director, Family Life Development Center at Cornell. His current research focuses on the impact of family and community violence and trauma on child development, as well as intervention initiatives. Other speakers will address a variety of topics, including youth courts; school-based mentoring; school violence; domestic violence response; curtailing bullying and social aggression; substance abuse prevention programs for youth; character education programs; healthy teen dating relationships; mental health services in schools; and family-based substance abuse programs. The conference will include a panel discussion, "Troubled Youth: An Organizational Perspective," which will focus on best practices for providing coordinated services for youth and families. Panel participants include Judge Michael Griffith, supervising judge of the Family Courts in the 8th Judicial District of New York State, and representatives of the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services and New York State Office for the Prevention of Domestic Violence. Panel members will explain the mission of their respective organizations and provide their perspectives on coordinated services for youth and families. More than 200 people, mostly from Upstate and Western New York, will attend the three-day conference. Young said the conference will provide attendees an opportunity to learn how different agencies support and serve youth. The Rural Justice Institute at Alfred University provides support to social services providers in the development of more effective outreach, treatment and support mechanisms for young people who are the victims of domestic violence and has been instrumental in efforts to better coordinate youth services in the region. RJI continues to work on a long-term project to create the Allegany County Data Partnership, a regional database on the numbers of youth in need of services and the agencies that provide them. The project includes creation of a model for networking among agencies in order to more effectively and efficiently deliver services.