

Persefona raises issue of domestic violence and sexual violence in relationships

The Persefona organization has launched a project entitled "Out of the Labyrinth of Violence" to further develop activities that fully address the issue of domestic violence and sexual violence. The aim of the project, which will run until April 2016, is to reduce the incidence of domestic violence perpetrated against men and women and to change society's attitude regarding sexual violence in relationships.

Persefona aids the victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse in the South Moravian Region by providing counseling through e-mail, in person and by telephone. Part of the project will be information campaigns focusing on the above-mentioned target groups and on individuals who want to learn how to manage their own aggressive behavior. "There are still gaps that must be filled, particularly when it comes to reaching specific target groups such as the victims of domestic violence and of sexual violence and focusing attention on therapeutic work with the individuals who perpetrate this violence," says Jitka Čechová, director of Persefona.

Since client demand persists for such services, and given the predicted impact of the outreach campaign, the existing capacity of the organization will be expanded, as will the number of consultations provided to victims and their loved ones, and individual therapy sessions for persons who have a problem with managing their own aggression in relationships. Group therapy sessions for such persons will be newly opened. Members of these groups will focus on taking responsibility for their violent behavior, on improving their ability to handle their own emotions, and on training in the skill of how to halt the escalation of their own anger.

"Thanks to the 'Out of the Labyrinth of Violence' project, we are implementing a statewide sociological survey of society's attitudes toward domestic violence and sexual violence and on the obstacles preventing victims from seeking aid," Čechová said. The results of the representative research, which will be the first of its kind in the Czech Republic, will then form the starting point for an outreach campaign.

Out of the Labyrinth of Violence

This project is supported by the Open Society Fund Praha from its Dejme (že)nám šanci ("Let's Give Ourselves and Women a Chance") program, which is financed by Norway Grants.



**Persefona z. s. provides professional social counseling to victims of domestic violence, rape and sexual abuse.
Jiráskova 8, Brno 602 00, Telefon: 545 245 996, 732 534 024
labyrinth@persefona.cz, www.persefona.cz**

Persefona will also be educating professionals through seminars, round tables and trainings designed to enhance professional competence and intensify interdisciplinary collaboration on these issues.

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Pavλίna Dočkalová

pdockalova@persefona.cz

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