



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MAGNOLIA CONSULTING, LLC RECEIVES GRANT FROM DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE FOR \$445,000 TO STUDY SCHOOL EMPLOYEE SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

[OR..] LOCAL CONSULTING GROUP TO LEAD \$445,000 STUDY OF SCHOOL SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

Charlottesville, VA. (May 10, 2016) – An estimated one out of ten K-12 students will experience school employee sexual misconduct during their school career. Now a Charlottesville-based education research firm is leading a national study to examine how schools respond to such incidents. The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has awarded a \$445,000 research grant to Magnolia Consulting, LLC as part of its Comprehensive School Safety Initiative, a federal program that in 2015 awarded \$69 million in grants to study the causes and consequences of school violence. Study results will inform efforts to improve policies and programs that protect children.

During the two-year study, *School Employee Sexual Misconduct: Policy Implementation and Effectiveness*, researchers will examine court documents and school policies in five diverse school districts, conduct 100 interviews and hold 15 focus groups with personnel whose school experienced an incident of school employee sexual misconduct in 2014.

The research will be led by Magnolia Consulting Senior Researcher Billie-Jo Grant along with Magnolia Consulting President Stephanie Wilkerson. Other team members include Terri Miller, president of the Nevada-based nonprofit S.E.S.A.M.E. (Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct and Exploitation); Charol Shakeshaft, professor of educational leadership at Virginia Commonwealth University; and Roger Collins, executive director of the Virginia School-University Partnership and retired Nelson County school superintendent.

“We want to find out how five geographically and demographically diverse U.S. districts defined, interpreted, and implemented policies before and after these incidents,” said Grant, who has published extensively in the field. “We hope that by describing specific strengths and challenges, this study will help schools more effectively prevent and respond to cases of misconduct.”

In order to elicit open and frank discussions, researchers will not identify participating schools. The study will also include strict measures to protect the anonymity of interviewees. “Without a doubt, school employee sexual misconduct is a sensitive topic to discuss and study, but it must be addressed,” added Magnolia President Wilkerson. “As education researchers, it is incumbent upon us to identify best practices in preventing and responding to school employee sexual misconduct based on empirical evidence. This critical study is part of a larger research agenda aimed at



equipping education leaders and policymakers with data-based information that will guide them in improving programs, policies, and laws that protect students from sexual predators in our schools. We are excited to begin this valuable work that we believe is a first step in building awareness and capacity to prevent, rather than react, to these offenses.”

NIJ launched the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative in 2014 with a congressional appropriation of \$75 million. Proposals were selected through a competitive application and review process. The goal of the Comprehensive School Safety Initiative is to improve the safety of our nation’s schools and students through rigorous research that produces practical knowledge.

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About Magnolia Consulting, LLC – cultivating learning and positive change.

Magnolia Consulting, LLC, is a small, woman-owned, independent, research and evaluation company. Headquartered in central Virginia, the Magnolia Consulting research team has expertise in conducting research and evaluation in the areas of preK-20 education, organizational change and development, community-based social service programming, school-based sensitive issues, and public outreach. Over the past 10 years, Magnolia Consulting has designed and implemented over 19 randomized control trials and 10 quasi-experimental evaluations, some of which were of projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education; the U.S. Department of Labor; the National Science Foundation; the National Aeronautics and Space Administration; Pearson, Inc.; National Geographic School Publishing; and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, Inc. in the areas of science, reading, math, study skills, early childhood, and English language proficiency. Magnolia Consulting’s evaluation services adhere to The Program Evaluation Standards set forth by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation as well as to the quality standards for research espoused by the U.S. Department of Education’s What Works Clearinghouse. Magnolia Consulting has established effective methods and processes for conducting rigorous studies including accurate power analyses, participant recruitment, student assessment and instrument construction, implementation fidelity measures, and comprehensive analyses, including multi-level modeling. For more information, visit [www.http://www.magnoliaconsulting.org](http://www.magnoliaconsulting.org).

About S.E.S.A.M.E. (Stop Educator Sexual Abuse, Misconduct & Exploitation)

S.E.S.A.M.E. is a non-profit organization established in 1996, to provide much needed support to victims/survivors, their families and professionals involved in educator sexual abuse/misconduct cases. S.E.S.A.M.E. is the leading voice for the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment of students by teachers and other school staff. Examples of S.E.S.A.M.E.’s recent work includes:

- Supporting countless victims, families, and professionals who contact us through our website,
- Writing articles, participating in media coverage, and serving as an expert witness for court cases,
- Speaking on Capitol Hill to support the passage of Protecting Students from Sexual and Violent Predators Act, which prohibits “passing the trash” (when school employees resign



amidst allegations of sexual misconduct and gain employment at another school without his/her new employer being alerted), and

- Supporting the passage of Pennsylvania's prohibition on passing the trash with the S.E.S.A.M.E. Bill.