

Sexual Violence Prevention: Tips for Faculty & Staff

Sexual violence is an unfortunate reality on college campuses, including ours. This fact sheet provides information about sexual assault and how you can play a role in responding to victims as well as contributing to a community that takes a strong stand against sexual assault.

What is Sexual Violence?

Sexual violence occurs when someone is forced or coerced/manipulated into unwanted sexual activity without agreeing or consenting. Reasons someone might not be able to consent include fear, being underage, having an illness or disability, or being incapacitated due to alcohol or other drugs. Consent can be initially given, and then later withdrawn.

Sexual violence is a crime that comes in many forms, including forced intercourse, sexual contact or touching, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, and exposure or voyeurism.

An important point to keep in mind is that sexual violence is never the victim's fault, regardless of what she or he is wearing or doing, including if the victim has been drinking or is in a relationship with the perpetrator.

Sexual Violence on Campus

- Over the course of an average 5-year college career, it is estimated that between 20% and 25% of college women will become victims of completed or attempted rape (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000).
- Males can also be victims of sexual violence and may be even less likely to report (Hart & Rennison, 2003).
- Among college women, 9 in 10 victims of rape and sexual assault knew their offender (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000).
- Almost 12.8% of completed rapes, 35% of attempted rapes, and 22.9% of threatened rapes

happened during a date (Fisher, Cullen, & Turner, 2000).

- Rape is far more extensive than reported in official statistics, and the large majority of rapists are never apprehended (Carr & VanDeusen, 2004).

Your Role in Prevention

Because you are a visible and respected member of the campus community, you play a role in changing the underlying norms and culture that perpetuate sexual violence, like traditional gender roles, power imbalances, victim-blaming, and oppression. Here are some ways you can help:

- Model respectful, egalitarian behavior to students, staff, and other faculty.
- Intervene when you see inappropriate behavior. If students or colleagues make sexist comments or joke about rape, speak up. If you witness students or colleagues sexually harassing someone on the street, speak up. If you are aware of dangerous hazing rituals on campus, speak up. Practice what you might say with your colleagues.
- Talk to other faculty and staff in your department about the policies and practices within your department related to gender and look for ways to assist others in creating a respectful environment.
- Talk to someone from your campus or Broome County's Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) at Crime Victims Assistance Center for more information on how you can prevent sexual violence. Invite their educators in to speak to your classes.
- Consider partnering with other departments to conduct research to understand more about this issue on your campus.

How Can You Help?

Faculty are uniquely positioned to assist students experiencing sexual violence, as they often see the warning signs—absence from class, decreased productivity, lower grades, social withdrawal—before others. In addition, as a trusted authority figure, students may turn to you when in crisis and disclose that they have been victims of sexual violence. You may be one of the first people a student confides in, so it is important to know how to handle a disclosure. Here are some guidelines (University of Wisconsin, 2009):

- ***Listen and don't judge.*** Listening is the single most important thing you can do. No one deserves to be the victim of violence, regardless of the surrounding circumstances. Avoid victim-blaming and asking questions that could imply fault, such as “How much were you drinking?” or “Why didn't you call the police?” Instead, offer your support with a statement such as, “I'm sorry that this happened to you. Thank you for telling me.” Let the victim know that he or she is *not* to blame for what happened.
- ***Tell the victim that you believe him or her.*** Victims of sexual violence are often met with disbelief when they decide to tell someone. In most cases, their trust in someone they know has been broken. They may be hesitant to trust others with their story. Remember, you are not an investigator; you are someone the victim has decided to trust and to confide in. Let them know that you believe and will support them.
- ***Refer the victim to resources*** on campus and in the community to talk with individuals who are trained on these issues. See the Resources at the bottom of this fact sheet for contact information, and keep it handy. You are not expected to be an expert on sexual violence, but you can play a huge role in directing the victim to experts who can provide advocacy and support.
- ***Follow your institution's policy.*** Many institutions have a policy on reporting acts of sexual violence. Learn the requirements for your school. In many cases, you will need to fill out a

form about the incident's occurrence, but will not need to provide identifying information about the victim.

- ***Be flexible***, if possible, when it comes to deadlines and assignments. Survivors of sexual violence may need to miss class to seek treatment or participate in the judicial process.

Resources

For more information about sexual violence on campus and how you can help, visit these websites.

- Interpersonal Violence Prevention Program
<http://www.binghamton.edu/ivp> or 607-777-3062
- University Police Department - 607-777-2393 or 911
- University Counseling Center - 607-777-2772
- Affirmative Action – 607-777-4775
- Crime Victims Assistance Center
<http://www.cvac.us> or 607-722-4256
- National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) <http://www.nsvrc.org>
- Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) <http://www.rainn.org>

References

- Carr, J., & VanDeusen, K. (2004). Risk factors for male sexual aggression on college campuses. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 19*(5), 279-289.
- Fisher, B., Cullen, I., & Turner, M. (2000). *National Institute of Justice Research Report: Sexual Victimization of College Women*. Retrieved July 30, 2009 from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>
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- University Health Services. (2009). *Faculty and Staff Resource Guide*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin. Available upon request from NSVRC.