

PRIMARY PREVENTION OF CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE

New Mexico has seven post-secondary colleges and universities, with a total student enrollment of over 60,000 students, as well as branch campuses, community colleges, and tribal colleges. National attention to sexual assault on campus has resulted in legislation to address this issue. In 2013, President Obama signed into law legislation that strengthened and reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act and amendments to the Clery Act. The new regulations will afford more rights to survivors of sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Programs must be implemented for staff and students, and prevention programming and procedures must be in place for when incidents occur (Clery Center For Security On Campus, n.d.).

- According to the Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) study conducted in 2007 (Krebs, et al., 2007), 1 out of 16 men will experience an attempted or completed sexual assault after entering college.
- Half of all student victims do not label their sexual assault incident as “rape” (Fisher, et al., 2003). This is particularly true when no weapon was used, no sign of physical injury is evident, and alcohol was involved—factors commonly associated with campus non-stranger rape (Bondurant, 2001).
- A National Institute of Justice Report found that 84% of colleges and universities offer confidential reporting, but only 46% offer anonymous reporting (Gonzales, et al., 2005).
- Less than 5% of completed and attempted rapes of college students are brought to the attention of campus authorities and/or law enforcement (Fisher et al., 2003).
- A 2006 campus survey found that 24% of bisexual women and 18% of lesbians were sexually assaulted while at university compared to 13% of heterosexual women (Martin, et al., 2011).

Social determinants: Social determinants of health include societal factors that contribute to health. For example, poverty may make it more difficult to avoid unsafe environments; social norms around gender roles, inequality, and expression are directly related to sexual violence (Bott, 2010); and, norms of secrecy and privacy contribute to spousal sexual assault and child abuse (Davis et al., 2006). Community responses of disbelief and victim-blaming not only cause harm to survivors, but also perpetuate a permissive environment that allows future perpetration. Only by changing the societal factors that permit sexual violence will we be able to substantially reduce sexual violence.

From 1997 to 2013, females 18 to 24 years old consistently experienced **higher rates of rape and sexual assault** than females in other age groups.

(USDOJ, 2015)

1 in 5 women will experience rape over the course of a 5-year college career.

(Gonzales et al., 2005)

More than **3 in 4** student victims of rape and sexual assault knew the offender.

(USDOJ, 2015)

Evidenced-Based and Promising Practices:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (DeGue et al., 2014), prevention strategies for campus populations must be comprehensive, addressing multiple levels of the socioecology. They should also be theory-based, based on the best available evidence, provide opportunities for skill-building and be evaluated for effectiveness in changing behaviors related to sexual violence perpetration and victimization. Only two primary prevention strategies have been shown to be effective for sexual violence prevention:

- **Safe Dates:**
<http://www.hazelden.org/web/go/safedates>
- **Shifting Boundaries:**
<http://www.nij.gov/topics/crime/intimate-partner-violence/teen-dating-violence/document/s/shifting-boundaries-all-schools.pdf>

Both of these programs were developed for middle/high school students but may be effective models if adapted for college-age students. Other strategies that are promising include:

- **Bystander intervention programs**, such as *Mentors in Violence Prevention* (<http://www.mvpnational.org/>) and *Bringing in the Bystander* (<http://cola.unh.edu/prevention-innovations/bringing-bystander%C2%AE>)
- **Strategies to engage men**, such as *Coaching Boys Into Men* (<http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/engaging-men/coaching-boys-into-men/>)
- Initiatives focused on **developing healthy sexuality and relationship skills**
- **Comprehensive public awareness campaigns**, e.g., integrating Take Back the Night rallies coupled with educational training for staff and sexual assault prevention education in freshman orientation sessions

Policy level strategies that may be promising for reducing campus sexual violence (Tharp et al., 2013) include increasing alcohol pricing, limiting

alcohol outlet density and banning alcohol on campuses and in college dorms. However, it should also be noted that eliminating access to alcohol will not eliminate campus sexual violence (Lisak & Miller, 2002).

Research continues on effective sexual violence prevention programming and policies. Go to <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/index.html> for the most up-to-date information.

Gaps:

- Campus climate surveys should be conducted to provide baseline and ongoing data about campus sexual violence.
- Schools need clear definitions of sexual violence that include understanding of consent.
- Sexual assaults are vastly underreported. Reasons for underreporting include concerns about confidentiality versus anonymity.
- Policies should be clearly stated. More research should be done on the advisability of coordinated or separate procedures for reporting; investigating the report; informal administrative actions, such as issuing a no-contact order; formal adjudication on campus; and criminal prosecution (Gonzales, et al., 2005).
- Research that examines changes in violent behavior rather than only attitudes towards sexual violence is crucial.

Community Resources:

New Mexico Rape Crisis Centers and Mental Health Center Sexual Abuse Program Coordinators: Contact for individual centers can be found at the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs website: <http://nmcsap.org/>

Other resources for campus-based sexual violence prevention may include organizations such as women’s resource centers, LGBTQ resource centers, Title IX coordinators and student counseling services.

“Young women [are] really just expecting to be raped as part of their college experience. ‘It’s just gonna happen, and when it does I’m not gonna call it that.’ And so the individual effects ripple, right? You have individuals who are so traumatized that they lose their GPA, their grades start slipping, they might lose their scholarships, they might elect to leave college completely.” - Focus Group Participant