



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

Campus Sexual Assault Policy Statement June 2014

[The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence](#) (NAESV) is the voice in Washington for the 56 state and territorial sexual assault coalitions and 1300 rape crisis centers working to end sexual violence and support survivors. Every day, local rape crisis centers see the devastating impact of campus sexual assault and the increasing occurrence of the crime. According to the Campus Sexual Assault Study, one in five women has been sexually assaulted while in college. The aftermath of rape can hamper both educational attainment and future employment for survivors. College survivors suffer high rates of PTSD, depression, and drug or alcohol abuse, which can hamper both their ability to succeed in school and future employment. At the same time, only a small percentage of these cases are reported, sanctioned by campus judicial boards or prosecuted, allowing offenders, who will often have multiple victims, to go without punishment as well as creating an unsafe environment for students.

NAESV applauds the recommendations advanced by the White House Task Force to Protect Students From Sexual Assault and supports a continued legislative and administrative focus on five key areas: partnerships, prevention, advocacy and confidentiality, training, and climate surveys.

- **Partnerships:** Postsecondary institutions have a prime opportunity to make significant and lasting change by integrating comprehensive sexual assault prevention throughout all aspects of campus life. State sexual assault coalitions and community-based rape crisis centers are experts in sexual violence with decades of experience doing sexual assault training and prevention as well as building an evidence base founded in practice and the real experiences of communities. Rape crisis centers can help schools better serve their students. These centers provide crisis intervention, 24-hour services, longer-term therapy, support groups, accompaniment to hospital and legal services, and community education and training. They stand ready to work with colleges and universities to design and implement prevention and training programming.

NAESV urges campuses to develop MOUs with state sexual assault coalitions and/or community-based rape crisis centers and to prioritize partnerships with local and state not-for-profit experts rather than partnerships with out-of-state and/or for-profit entities. NAESV believes that each community has unique characteristics and that state sexual assault coalitions and community-based rape crisis centers know first-hand the available medical, legal and support services. MOUs should include fees for services rendered or a mutually agreed upon plan to fund activities. If a given community lacks a rape crisis center, or the local center is unable to take on additional responsibilities, the state sexual assault coalition may be able to serve as a partner for some purposes. Reimbursing rape crisis centers and coalitions for their services is a best practice.

State sexual assault coalitions and/or community-based rape crisis centers can be partners on a broad range of campus activities to address sexual violence and comply with federal law including:

- Providing training to campus judicial officials, campus police and/or security, residence life, and Title IX coordinators;
 - Providing or consulting on ongoing prevention programming and initiatives now required by the Campus SaVE Act;
 - Providing guidance and acting as a liaison on a campus task force/sexual assault response team;
 - Providing confidential advocacy and counseling to student survivors; and
 - Providing training on sex offending behaviors and effective sanctions, or facilitating partnerships with those with expertise in sex offending.
- **Prevention:** Primary prevention strategies are focused on stopping the violence before it happens. Institutions must assess their readiness for prevention and measure the effectiveness of programs. State sexual assault coalitions and community-based agencies, often funded by the federal Rape Prevention and Education (RPE) Program, are essential partners to help provide training and technical assistance about evidence-based and evidence-informed strategies to prevent sexual violence. We also recommend that state boards of regents have access to the prevention strategies institutions utilize and the frequency of interventions, as well as collect annual reports on outcome data regarding the effectiveness of programs.
 - **Advocacy & Confidentiality:** Sexual assault is a unique crime: victims often blame themselves; the associated trauma can leave memories fragmented; and insensitive or judgmental questioning can re-traumatize the victim. It is imperative that survivors' confidentiality is guarded. If a survivor chooses not to report the assault, this choice must be honored and her or his anonymity protected for the purpose of Clery Act reporting. Guidance provided to universities regarding their obligations to disclose survivor or incident information must reinforce the value of privacy for survivors. Title IX and Clery both reference survivors' rights related to privacy and confidentiality. All advocates, whether working on a campus or in the community, must be able to honor the confidentiality needs of survivors. The cornerstone of rape crisis advocacy is empowering survivors to regain control of their lives by making their own decisions following sexual assault. Campuses are tasked with preventing these crimes, supporting survivors, creating a safe learning environment, and holding offenders accountable. In doing this, we must keep the needs of survivors central to this process by granting advocates confidentiality when supporting survivors of campus sexual violence.

At the same time, it is essential for campuses to rigorously investigate reported sexual assaults and proactively look for patterns of perpetration. Campuses must be clear which employees have a duty to report and which employees can guard confidentiality. NAESV believes the White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault recommendations appropriately balance survivor confidentiality and public safety concerns. NAESV would support legislation to codify this policy.

Conversely, NAESV could not support a blanket mandatory reporting policy requiring campuses to report sexual assaults to local law enforcement even with an opt-out provision. Survivors must be apprised of the avenues and procedures for reporting as well as advocacy assistance in making and following through with reports. However, the act of reporting must be the survivor's decision.

- **Training:** Central to training for supporting survivors and changing the culture of sexual violence is providing trauma-informed services and response systems. Institutions should provide new campus security and police officers with training on sexual assault investigations, and annual policy reviews for quality assurance. Title IX officers should be required to attend annual trainings and partner with community-based rape crisis centers and/or state sexual assault coalitions. Additionally, campuses should include local rape crisis centers and/or state sexual assault coalitions in identifying plans for resolution agreements and compliance reviews between higher education institutions and the Department of Education. Campus personnel need training on sex offending behaviors and effective sanctions, training that can be provided by state coalitions, local rape crisis centers, and/or their professional allies.
- **Climate Surveys:** NAESV supports a requirement that postsecondary institutions conduct climate surveys to better ascertain the extent and nature of sexual violence on individual campuses. It will be essential that climate survey questions are developed using the strongest scientific data available and with the help of experts, informed by experience conducting surveys of sexual violence victimization, as well as experienced advocates from rape crisis centers. Climate surveys must be developed in a spirit of mutual collaboration and teamwork, and just as survey development will require collaboration, so too will the process of interpreting results and developing action steps. Sexual violence is a crime and an endemic social problem with complex causes. There is little to be gained from simplistic finger-pointing. No institution should be incentivized to further hide areas where improvement is needed.

The recommendations of the White House Task Force to Protect Students Against Sexual Assault marked a historic commitment at the highest levels of leadership to address this entrenched and unpalatable social problem, and we are hopeful. It will take a concerted and ongoing commitment from all postsecondary institutions to truly turn the tide of campus sexual violence. We commend Congress for its diligent work to craft legislation that is victim-centered with a focus on prevention, and focusing on partnerships with local rape crisis centers and state sexual assault coalitions as the experts poised to best assist campuses in addressing this problem.

HAVE ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS?

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The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence is the voice in Washington for state coalitions and local programs working to end sexual violence and support survivors.