

Sexual Assault in the UW System

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Objective

Identify the gaps in policy disseminated to students in University of Wisconsin System schools and how actors involved in campuses view and interact with sexual violence policy.

Methodology

- Information unofficially disseminated to students collected from UW-Oshkosh, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Stout.
- Interviews conducted with actors involved in implementing sexual violence policy at UW-Stout to determine how they view policy and use it to provide services to students.

Background: Campus Sexual Assault

- Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 prohibits institutions from discriminating on the basis of sex. The US Supreme Court has held that student-on-student sexual harassment qualifies as discrimination under Title IX.
- The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act of 1991 requires institutions to report crime statistics and share information about prevention programs.
- The Office of Civil Rights in the Department of Education (2001) presented a revised version of sexual harassment guidance including instructions on investigating sexual assault allegations.
- The Department of Education's Dear Colleague Letter of 2011 provided new guidance for enforcing and implementing Title IX and more effectively preventing sexual violence.
- SaVE Act of 2013 requires campuses to report crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking; expands the hate crime categories; requires schools to publish specific details of campus proceedings and a list of whom may be reported too; requires training for school officials; and emphasizes equity.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Content Analysis from 5 UW-System schools showed that information disseminated to students failed to measure up to the parameters identified by McMahon (YEAR), and therefore were lacking critical information that may encourage student reporting or provide access to critical resources. The majority of schools were especially failing to:

- provide definitions of terminology related to sexual assault such as consent
- provide substantial training to faculty, students, and staff
- provide information about confidential services and
- provide information in one area that was easy to access and understand.

Themes in interviews include (a) education, (b) empowerment, (c) confidentiality, and (d) collaboration.

This author suggests that, to raise awareness of sexual assault and the resources available to students, service providers need to work in collaboration to provide education and improve the relationships with students that would increase reporting and hopefully create a safer environment on college campuses.

Themes in Victims' Services Interviews

Student Organizations Campus Police Local Advocacy Services The Dean of Students Office



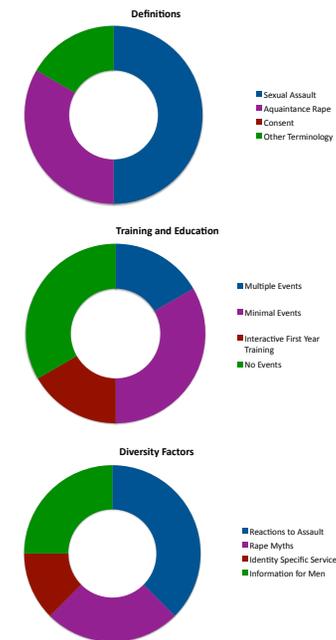
Quotes from Victims' Services

- I think, I think because of the lack of reporting... it's like here we have the services, I've got a good team together, I think we've got good people at our agency... but if you don't want to use us, you don't want to report, you don't want to call, you don't want to... there's nothing I can do.
- So I think educating people is the biggest gap that you can kind of climb over cause a lot of people have misconceptions about it [sexual assault], and it's just not something that people understand, and I think that it's not rules that are gonna make people change. It's teaching people that's gonna help them change.
- One of the things that's really unique about Wisconsin is that ... our code of conduct is state statute. So, um, that's why it's written in such horrible legal ways. No one can understand it, not students much less administrators. It's ridiculous.
- What we've found is that most students do not go straight to law enforcement. Most victims will go to another source first ... So we really try hard for people to get to know our officers before they need us.

Parameters of Policy Effectiveness

As identified by McMahon (2008)

- Policy must contain clear behavior definitions that include explanations of consent to sexual activity and descriptive scenarios involving sexual assault with non-strangers.
- Policy must clearly state the commitment of the institution to the recognition and management of sexual assault.
- Policy should provide training opportunities for students, faculty, and staff that would detail what to do if someone discloses a sexual assault to them.
- Policy should demonstrate an awareness of the diverse factors surrounding sexual assault and components essential to support the victim.
- Resources must be available to students as they are essential to ensuring victim safety, support, and health.
- Policy must acknowledge obstacles to a victim reporting sexual assault and take steps to extend confidentiality.
- Policies must demonstrate a commitment to support a victim who comes forward to help and take measures to remove blockades to victim reporting.
- Policy must include set procedures for investigating sexual assault and specific sanctions to discipline and punish perpetrators.



0/5 schools provided an easy to understand or easy to access set of procedures that students will go through when reporting a sexual assault or when using specific services.