

# Public Statement Addressing Sexual Assault Prevention

A USC Well-being Collective Toolkit



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## USC Well-being Collective

The USC Well-being Collective harnesses the power of Collective Impact for a variety of distinct and often siloed academic departments, administrative units, recognized student organizations and local non-profits to come together and work with the whole student community towards our common agenda: **strengthening a campus culture driven by student wellbeing.**

This goal is supported by four interrelated strategic goals:

**Equity and Inclusion** – enhancing the culture of equity and inclusion

**Resilience and Thriving** – creating a culture where individuals and communities thrive

**Alcohol and Other Substance Use** – disrupting the culture of at-risk substance use

**Consent and Healthy Relationships** — fostering a culture of consent and healthy relationships

# Introduction

While sexual violence affects millions of people across the country each year, young people remain at the highest risk of sexual assault. Colleges and universities face significant challenges in addressing and preventing sexual assault and misconduct on their campuses.

According to the 2019 AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct, the overall rate of nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since the student enrolled at the school was 13.0 percent, with rates for women, Transgender, Genderqueer, and Non-binary (TGQN) and undergraduate students being significantly higher than for men and graduate/professional students. In addition, undergraduate TGQN and female students reported having the highest rates of other forms of sexual misconduct. Among undergraduate TGQN students, 65.1 percent reported experiencing harassing behavior since first enrolling at the school, 21.5 percent with partners reported intimate partner violence (IPV) and 15.2 percent reported experiencing stalking. Among undergraduate women, 59.2, 14.1 and 10.0 percent experienced harassing behavior, IPV and stalking, respectively (Cantor D, et al 2019).

The promotion of healthy relationships and affirmative consent through modeling, prevention education modules, workshops, and relationship campaigns are consistent strategies utilized by institutions of higher education in order to prevent sexual assault and misconduct. Universities can have further impact on shaping campus culture by prioritizing statements regarding sexual assault and misconduct through clear and straightforward communication. Institutions can speak to unique perspective, own responsibility, and create leadership capability with public statements addressing sexual assault prevention and response specific to their campus.

# Public Statement Addressing Sexual Assault Prevention

## Toolkit Description:

School Administrators publish public statement addressing campus-wide sexual assault prevention initiatives.

## Strategic Goals:

Equity + Inclusion

Thrive + Mental Health

At-Risk Substance Abuse

**Consent + Healthy Relationships**

## Action Areas:

Building healthy public policy

Creating supportive environments

**Strengthening community action**

Developing personal skills

**Re-orienting all sectors towards prevention**

## A Toolkit For:

Faculty

Staff

Student

Parent/Guardian

**Administrator**

# Goal

Emerging research shows public statements by university leadership influence how students perceive the importance of sexual assault prevention and response. Ideally, leaders should identify sexual assault prevention as a priority area in a communication piece to all students. Bringing this topic to the forefront can shift organizational climate and shift perception in the student body. Publicly addressing sexual assault and harassment is an important first step in creating a climate where sexual violence is not tolerated by the university community. It is the goal of this strategy to encourage university administrators in publishing a public statement addressing campus-wide sexual assault prevention initiatives.

## Intended Outcomes

### Key Performance Indicators:

- Increase percent of students who report upstanding behaviors
- Reduce percent of students who experience sexual assault in the last 12 months

## Evidence of Effectiveness

Some Evidence: Strategies with this rating are likely to work, but further research is needed to confirm effects. These strategies have been tested more than once and results trend positive overall.

## Implementation Ideas

### Administrator

Senior administrators may hold strategic planning processes with campus leadership and communication teams to develop mission statements, vision statements, and prevention and response messages for sexual assault prevention health campaigns.

Administrators may conduct assessment of current campus-wide prevention efforts and communicate out to student communities.

Administrators may work with campus stakeholders to develop comprehensive action plans and outline steps for prevention work efforts. Prevention and response efforts should be communicated widely throughout the university community, further inviting student feedback for open transparency.

Administrators may provide information on campus-wide prevention and response efforts to prospective students and their families in open transparency. Information should be directly communicated, easy to locate and clear to understand. The following questions can help create informational guides for the prospective campus community:

- What training or other prevention and education programs does your school provide to help stop sexual assault from happening in the first place?
- Does the institution have a Title IX coordinator? Who is that person and what responsibilities do they hold?
- Does your school have an easy-to-understand process for reporting sexual assault? Where is it located?
- Where are complaints filed (include reporting policies and protocols with provisions for confidential reporting)?
- What procedures apply to complaints filed by students alleging sexual violence carried out by employees, other students, or third parties?
- What are provisions for adequate, reliable, and impartial investigations of complaints?
- What services do you currently have to support students?
- What services are currently launching or being created to support students?

# Implementation Resources

American College Health Association  
NASPA Culture of Respect

# References

Hart, C.G., Crossley, A. D., & Correll, S. J. (2018). Leader messaging and attitudes toward sexual violence. *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 4, 1–11.

Cantor D, Fisher B, Chibnall B, et al. (2019). Report on the AAU campus climate survey on sexual assault and sexual misconduct. Rockland, MD: The Association of American Universities. Retrieved from [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7\\_\(01-16-2020\\_FINAL\).pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7_(01-16-2020_FINAL).pdf)

McMahon, S. & Stapleton, J. (2018). Undergraduate exposure to messages about campus sexual assault: Awareness of campus resources. *Journal of College Student Development* 59(1), 110-115.



# Produced Examples

## Examples of University Public Statements:

- [American University, Awareness & Prevention Initiatives June 26 2020](#)
- [University of Redlands, Sexual Misconduct Prevention & Response](#)
- [Fairfield University, Be SAFE](#)
- [University of Oregon, Collective Statement from the University of Oregon's Crisis Intervention and Sexual Violence Support Services Program, Prevention Services, Student Survivor Legal Services, and Women's Center on the Final Title IX Guidance from the Department of Education](#)
- [Miami University, Sexual Assault and Interpersonal Violence Prevention, Education, and Resources](#)
- [Sample Language for Interim and Supportive Measures to Protect Students Following an Allegation of Sexual Misconduct White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, September 2014.](#)

## SEXUAL ASSAULT COMMUNICATION IN STAGES

Based on information from conducted interviews

<h3 style="margin: 0;">PREVENTION</h3> <p>School groups coordinate to facilitate community outreach, education and prevention efforts, such as Sexual Assault Awareness Week or special publications on the topic of sexual assault.</p> <p><b>Campus Sex Crimes Prevention Act of 2000 (CSCPA)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Title IX Coordinators at respective schools work proactively to address concerns of sexual and gender-based harassment and inform students and staff of Title IX.</li> <li>● Building relationships face-to-face to build trust in hope that victims come forward to report in the case of sexual assault (ex. Isla Vista Foot Patrol).</li> </ul>
<h3 style="margin: 0;">WHEN IT HAPPENS</h3> <p>General information about the assault is published in school newspapers, either before or after the school officially sends a statement to students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Per the Clery Act, schools must publish annual security report on campus crime and sent out Timely Warnings if there is a threat to the public</li> <li>● Apps like Callisto designed to detect repeat perpetrators provide victims with the information to make the reporting decision that feels right for them</li> </ul>
<h3 style="margin: 0;">THE AFTERMATH</h3> <p>Information about supportive services is relayed to students, and especially the victim. Some student groups or organizations may advocate for others to take action by calling, emailing, and tweeting their government representatives to provide justice and support to victims and survivors of sexual assault.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Investigations occur, and information is released to administrations on a need-to-know basis so as not to interfere with the ongoing investigation and the victim's privacy</li> <li>● Moderated discussions can take place to ensure that students are aware of what sexual assault is, how to prevent it, and available resources</li> </ul>

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# **Office for Health Promotion Strategy**

## **Backbone for the USC Well-being Collective**

The Office for Health Promotion Strategy, backbone for the USC Well-being Collective, is embedded in USC Student Health and serves as the administrative core to support campus partners in aligning their strategic objectives with student wellbeing. The Office for Health Promotion Strategy works with participating partners, the Steering Committee, and most importantly, students to activate change at USC.

For additional questions, please contact: USC Student Health, Office for Health Promotion Strategy, Backbone for USC Well-being Collective at [wellbeingcollective@usc.edu](mailto:wellbeingcollective@usc.edu)

**USC** Well-being Collective

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