

Interpersonal Violence and Alcohol and Other Drug Use

Under increasing pressure from parents, students, and lawmakers to ensure the safety of campus communities, colleges and universities have improved security measures in residence halls and other buildings and have made an effort to raise awareness of the ways in which people can protect themselves against crime.

To spur these crime prevention efforts, the federal Student Right-to-Know and Campus Security Act mandates that colleges and universities publish reports of crime statistics so that campus community members, prospective students, and their parents can become better informed of crime rates at different institutions.¹

Campus crime statistics from more than 6,000 institutions of higher education indicate that in 2003 there were more than 155,000 liquor law violations, more than 26,000 drug arrests, approximately 3,000 aggravated assaults, more than 2,500 forcible sex offenses, and 10 murders on these campuses.² Experts agree, however, that these figures, which are based on *reported* crimes, underestimate actual crimes on America's campuses.² In fact, the National College Women Sexual Victimization (NCWSV) study, a 1996 survey of 4,446 women sponsored by the U.S. Department of Justice, found that fewer than 5 percent of completed and attempted rapes were reported to law enforcement officials.³

Contrary to common belief, most violence on campus cannot be attributed to outsiders intruding on an otherwise peaceful environment. In fact,

some experts estimate that at least 70 percent of violent acts are perpetrated by students.⁴ The majority of college students fall within the age group (18–24) most likely to be the victims of nonfatal assault. This age group is also overrepresented among perpetrators of violence.⁵

Experts suggest that efforts to prevent violence must be comprehensive, beginning with an assessment of those most affected by various types of interpersonal violence and the identification of risk factors in the campus environment that foster or perpetuate violence, such as alcohol use, fraternity hazing practices, and intolerance of individual differences. This much-needed assessment can be a difficult process, however, because the vast majority of violent acts go unreported. Often victims fear reprisal from their assailants or believe that university or law enforcement officials will not respond adequately.⁶

■ Types of Violence Most Affecting Colleges and Universities

Interpersonal violence can take many forms on campuses. Three of the most prevalent types are

- (1) rape and sexual assault;
- (2) nonsexual physical assault, including fights, muggings, hazing, and dating violence; and
- (3) hate crimes.⁷

■ Rape and Sexual Assault

The National College Women Sexual Victimization (NCWSV) study defines rape as follows:

Forced sexual intercourse including both psychological coercion as well as physical force. Forced sexual intercourse means vaginal, anal, or oral penetration by the offender(s). This category also includes incidents where the penetration is from a foreign object such as a bottle. Includes attempted rapes, male as well as female victims, and both heterosexual and homosexual rape. Attempted rape includes verbal threats of rape.³

The NCWSV study projects that 20–25 percent of college women are the victims of an attempted or completed rape during their college careers.³

Women aged 16 to 24, the age category that includes most college women, are four times more likely to be sexually assaulted than women of all ages.⁸

Gang rapes on campus are most often perpetrated by men who participate in intensive male peer groups that foster rape-supportive behaviors and attitudes.

For additional information

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Education Development Center, Inc.
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Institutional Liability

Before 1980, colleges and universities were generally not held liable for crimes occurring on their campuses. More recently, however, institutions have had to pay compensatory damages to crime victims in civil suits when courts have ruled that authorities failed to take adequate steps to prevent violence.⁴

In one much-publicized case, the state's highest court ordered the State University of New York at Stony Brook to pay \$400,000 in damages to a woman who was raped in her residence hall, ruling that the university had not taken sufficient precautions to keep the dormitory secure.⁴

Public perception that administrators do not take campus safety seriously may also erode an institution's ability to recruit and retain students and to garner support from alumni, donors, and elected officials.²⁵ Colleges and universities are expected not only to protect the campus community from intruders but also to take active steps to reduce the major risk factors associated with campus violence, chief among them alcohol and other drug use by students.

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One review of 24 alleged gang rapes found that in 22 of the 24 documented cases, the perpetrators were members of fraternities or intercollegiate athletics teams.⁹

Nonsexual Assault

Data suggest that male athletes and fraternity members are more likely than other students to perpetrate nonsexual violence on campus.¹⁰

Nonsexual dating violence is also widespread on campus. In a study of dating violence, 25 percent of the college men surveyed admitted to slapping, pushing, or restraining a female partner.¹¹

Another form of nonsexual violence on campus is hazing. A study by Alfred University defines hazing as “any humiliating or dangerous activity expected of you to join a group, regardless of your willingness to participate.”¹² Hazing has included activities as dangerous as forced alcohol use, physical abuse, kidnap, and being tied up and abandoned.¹² There has been minimal research on the prevalence and consequences of hazing at institutions of higher education, and researchers should explore such topics.

Hate Crimes

FBI 2006 statistics note that hate and bias crimes reported on school and college campuses represented 12.2 percent of all hate and bias crimes reported throughout the United States.¹³ U.S. Department of Education statistics state that in 2003 there were 72 reported hate crimes on U.S. college campuses, including 13 cases of aggravated assault, 2 forcible sex offenses, and 33 cases of arson.¹⁴

The National Institute Against Prejudice and Violence (NIAPV) estimates that 20–25 percent of students of color are victims of physical or psychological harm every year.¹⁵

The Anti-Defamation League reported 81 acts of anti-Semitic harassment and violence on campus in 2007.¹⁶ The League has documented roughly 100 acts of anti-Semitic harassment and violence each year since 1991, including a shotgun attack at the University of Pennsylvania in 1995.¹⁶

A study conducted at Yale found that 42 percent of lesbian and gay students surveyed had suffered some form of physical aggression while at the university, such as being chased, having objects thrown at them, having personal property destroyed, or being assaulted. Other studies at different universities have found similar levels of abuse against homosexuals.¹⁷

Alcohol and Violence

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) 2002 report on college drinking estimates that more than 70,000 students between the ages of 18 and 24 survive alcohol-related sexual assault or date rape each year. This same report estimates that more than 600,000 students are assaulted by drinking students on a yearly basis.¹⁸

In their 1993 study of 530 undergraduate men, Koss and Gaines found alcohol to be one of the most significant contributors to sexual aggression among male college students.¹⁹ Students are more likely to become aggressive when their blood alcohol level rises rapidly (for example, following heavy drinking), lessening capacity for conflict resolution and decreasing inhibitions. In addition, many students use intoxication as an excuse for inappropriate and violent behavior.²⁰

Several studies estimate that between 50 and 80 percent of violence on campus is alcohol-related.⁷ One study of residence halls found that 71 percent of violent acts directed toward resident advisers were alcohol-related.⁶ In a study of students who were victims of sexual aggression while in college, from intimidation and illegal restraint to rape, the women surveyed reported that 68 percent of their male assailants had been drinking at the time of the attack.⁸

A national survey of more than 14,000 students found that 11 percent of students who do not drink heavily but live on campuses with high levels of drinking have been victims of assault. This rate is nearly double the number of victims of assault on campuses with lower levels of drinking.²¹ A study of college men in New England found that those who drink heavily are four times as likely as moderate drinkers to be involved in physical fights.²²

Strategies for Institutions of Higher Education

Because alcohol and other drugs are involved in most acts of violence on campus, college and university administrators are under increasing pressure to acknowledge this connection and reduce alcohol consumption on campus. But because alcohol alone does not cause violence, campuses must also address other contributing factors.

Since research has found that fraternities, athletics teams, and other male peer groups foster rape-supportive norms, some experts have suggested that prevention programs can be most effective when targeting these types of all-male forums.²³

Following are five categories and examples of environmental strategies for preventing alcohol and other drug use on campus.²⁴

Promoting Alcohol- and Drug-Free Social, Recreational, and Extracurricular Options and Public Service

- Sponsor alcohol- and drug-free social and recreational options for students, such as a student center, coffeehouse, or other alcohol-free setting. Marketing efforts for these events must clearly state the alcohol- and drug-free guidelines for the activities.
- Sponsor and publicize volunteer and community service opportunities for students.

Creating a Social, Academic, and Residential Environment That Promotes Healthy Social Norms

- Develop programs targeted to male peer groups, such as fraternities and athletics teams.
- Develop social norms marketing campaigns to correct exaggerated misperceptions of alcohol and other drug abuse.
- Promote a healthy environment through the college admissions procedures.
- Offer core classes in the academic schedule on Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.
- Make substance-free residence options available.
- Educate faculty and staff about behavioral indicators, student norms, and cultural attitudes related to high-risk or illegal alcohol and other drug use.
- Encourage faculty to interact more with students.
- Publicize pro-health messages through campus and community media channels.

Restricting Marketing and Promotion of Alcohol

- Restrict alcohol advertising in sports stadiums and on athletics publications.
- Reduce marketing and promotion targeted at athletes. Work with local bar owners to limit such marketing.

Limiting Availability and Access

- Work with local law enforcement to stay current with trends related to alcohol and other drug use on campus.

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- Ban or restrict alcohol on campus.
- Prohibit alcohol use in public places.
- Prohibit delivery or use of kegs or other common containers on campus.
- Require alcohol servers to be registered and trained.
- Disseminate guidelines for off-campus parties.
- Regulate the number and concentration of alcohol outlets near campus.
- Advocate a rise in the costs of beer and liquor licenses.
- Promote a limit to the hours of alcohol sales.
- Advocate a reduction in the container size of alcoholic beverages.
- Encourage limitations regarding quantity per sale of alcohol.
- Promote required keg registration.
- Encourage an increase in state alcohol taxes.

Enforcing Campus Policies and State and Local Laws

- Communicate campus alcohol and other drug policies clearly and frequently to the community, including possible consequences for violations.
- Require registration of on-campus functions.
- Enforce ID checks at on-campus functions.
- Use undercover operations at campus pubs and on-campus functions.
- Use patrols to observe on-campus and off-campus parties.
- Increase disciplinary sanctions for violation of campus alcohol and other drug policies.
- Increase criminal prosecution of students for alcohol-related offenses.
- Enforce driver's license penalties for minors violating alcohol laws.
- Educate sellers and servers about potential legal liability.
- Advocate enforcement of ID checks at off-campus bars and liquor stores.
- Enforce penalties for sale of liquor to minors.
- Enforce laws against buying alcohol for minors.
- Enforce penalties for possessing fake IDs.
- Use undercover operations at retail alcohol outlets.
- Advocate stringent enforcement of DUI laws.
- Implement roadblocks.
- Establish dramshop laws that apply legal action for serving intoxicated drinkers or minors.



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RESOURCES

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention ♦ <http://www.higheredcenter.org>

Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools (OSDFS)

U.S. Department of Education
<http://www.ed.gov/osdfs>; 202-245-7896

OSDFS supports efforts to create safe schools, respond to crises, prevent alcohol and other drug abuse, ensure the health and well-being of students, and teach students good character and citizenship. The agency provides financial assistance for drug abuse and violence prevention programs and activities that promote the health and well-being of students in elementary and secondary schools and institutions of higher education.

The U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention

<http://www.higheredcenter.org>; 1-800-676-1730; TDD Relay-friendly, Dial 711

The Higher Education Center offers an integrated array of services to help campuses and communities come together to identify problems; assess needs; and plan, implement, and evaluate alcohol and other drug abuse and violence prevention programs. Services include training; technical assistance; publications; support for the Network Addressing Collegiate Alcohol and Other Drug Issues; and evaluation activities. The Higher Education Center's publications are free and can be downloaded from its Web site.

The Center offers resources for violence prevention on campus at <http://www.higheredcenter.org/high-risk/violence>. The Center's Campuses and Other Drugs Web page includes resources on date rape and club drugs, found at <http://www.higheredcenter.org/high-risk/drugs>.

Other Organizations

Mentors in Violence Prevention (MVP) Program

<http://www.sportinsociety.org/vpd/mvp.php>;
617-373-4025

In the MVP program, multiracial teams of former collegiate and professional male athletes talk with boys and young men about attitudes toward women, violence, and masculinity. Through the program, researchers seek to reduce men's violence against women by inspiring athletes to challenge and reconstruct predominant male norms that equate strength in men with dominance over women.

National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA)

<http://www.trynova.org>; 24-hour hotline:
1-800-879-6682; 703-535-6682

NOVA offers aid, information, and referrals for victims of all types of crime and provides special trainings and technical assistance to support crisis-response programs that address violence on college campuses. Its manual *Responding to Communities in Crisis* includes a section for colleges and universities.

Rape Treatment Center

Santa Monica-UCLA Medical Center
<http://www.911rape.org>; 310-319-4000

The Rape Treatment Center established the National Campus Rape Program. The program distributes *Sexual Assault on Campus: What Colleges Can Do*, a report outlining policies and programs colleges can adopt to decrease sexual violence and provide support for students who are victimized. It also produced the 20-minute award-winning documentary film *Campus Rape*, which explores the problem of sexual assault and presents prevention information.

North-American Interfraternity Conference

<http://www.nicindy.org>; 317-872-1112

The North-American Interfraternity Conference (NIC) represents 63 member fraternities on more than 800 college campuses. The organization provides resources and services to member fraternities

and colleges on a range of topics of interest to Greek societies, including the prevention of substance abuse and sexual assault.

NIC also distributes the Our Chapter/Our Choice Program, a peer-led workshop developed by Dr. Jeff Linkenbach and designed to help Greek society chapters reassess alcohol and other drug norms.

Security On Campus, Inc. (SOC)

<http://www.securityoncampus.org>; 1-888-251-7959

SOC is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to fostering safe campus environments. SOC educates prospective students, parents, and the campus community about the prevalence of crime on campus and assists victims and their families with guidance pertaining to laws, victims' organizations, legal counsel, and access to information.

Other Internet Resources

Resources for Addressing Sexual Harassment

Office for Civil Rights, Customer Service Team
<http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/OCR/sexharassresources.html>; 1-800-421-3481

This site offers resources on sexual harassment and hate crimes, and includes the publication *Protecting Students from Harassment and Hate Crime: A Guide for Schools*.

Minnesota Center Against Violence & Abuse

<http://www.mincava.umn.edu>; 612-624-0721

This organization maintains an electronic clearinghouse on the World Wide Web, with access to thousands of Gopher servers, interactive discussion groups, newsgroups, and Web sites around the world. The clearinghouse includes a directory of federal and private funding sources that support violence prevention programs.

National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS)

<http://www.ncjrs.gov>; 1-800-851-3420

Administered by the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, the NCJRS offers justice and substance abuse information to support research, policy, and program development.



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