

SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION & RESPONSE

According to the Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey, over 60% of university students disclosed an experience of sexual harassment and almost one-quarter of university students disclosed a non-consensual sexual experience.¹ Yet, despite the guidance provided in the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act, institutional sexual violence prevention and response efforts do not meet the needs of students and survivors.

SUMMARY

The desire to protect all students and support all people who have experienced sexual violence should be at the centre of university sexual violence policy development processes. Statistics Canada suggests a rate of 73 incidents of sexual violence per 1,000 students.² These are alarming statistics, and it is critical that the provincial government continue its leadership in addressing sexual violence on our campuses.

The provincial government should amend Ontario Regulation 131/16 to include essential aspects of survivor-centric policies identified in existing literature and in the results of the Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey.

The *Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act*, along with Ontario Regulation 131/16, required the development of standalone policies and protocols for addressing sexual violence and harassment on campuses. These are important pieces of legislation with the potential to foster positive change, yet even with this legislation, **22.5% of university students reported being dissatisfied with their institutional response to sexual violence.**³ One way that the provincial government can address this concern is by looking to evidence and best practices to provide the guidance needed to implement comprehensive policies.

¹ Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey Results

² *Courage to Act: Developing a National Draft Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada*

³ Student Voices on Sexual Violence Survey Results

⁴ <https://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/2015-r022/2015-r022-en.pdf>

The provincial government should increase funding for, and adapt Terms and Conditions for, the Women's Campus Safety Grant in order to address the needs for sexual violence education, bystander intervention training and other interventions, as well as program evaluation on university campuses.

The Women's Campus Safety Grant is a provincial initiative that has supported universities to address safety for women and trans students on campuses since 1991. However, our knowledge and understanding of sexual violence has grown tremendously since then, and the provincial government can play an important role in ensuring that we are equipping institutions with all the tools and resources they need to implement prevention programs, education, and training. By increasing the funding and amending the Terms of Reference, campuses can implement more effective prevention work. The province would not only benefit socially, but also economically recognizing that sexual violence has both societal and economic costs (sexual violence costs the most of all violent crimes in Canada, at \$4.8 billion/year).⁴

The provincial government should ensure campus security at post-secondary institutions are trained in survivor-centric responses to disclosures and the prevention of sexual violence to create safer, more supporting reporting structures.

Campus security interact with students across campuses where sexual violence is present. Campus security act sometimes as police, and other times as general security across the campus geography. Therefore, they should be mandated to receive training specific to their roles that encompasses a trauma-informed approach in order to ensure they are prepared to prevent and respond to instances of sexual violence. This not only creates safer reporting structures, but also helps to support more survivors to come forward.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Amending Ontario Regulation 131/16

The provincial government has laid out what it expects institutions to include in their sexual violence policies in Ontario Regulation 131/16. OUSA has identified a more comprehensive set of guidelines based on evidence and best-practice that the provincial government should adopt to better support institutions to implement survivor-centric and student proposed practices and stipulations into their policies:

- Inclusion of comprehensive definitions of sexual assault and sexual violence;
- Recognition and reconciliation of conflicts of interest;
- Stipulations for maintaining privacy and confidentiality;
- Explanations of complainants' rights;
- Outline of potential interim measures for survivors;
- Stipulations for sexual violence-specific training for investigators;
- Explanation of complainants' and respondents' rights to representation, support persons, or advocates;
- A statement that complainants' lesser violations of school policies will be excused (e.g. alcohol policies);
- Statement that complainants' sexual history will be excluded from investigations/hearings;
- Commitment to resolve complaints in a timely fashion;
- Inclusion of expectations surrounding the burden of proof;
- Explanation of rules governing adjudicative processes and hearings;
- Inclusions of examples of potential sanctions against respondents;
- Statement of complaint and respondents' rights to appeal adjudicative decisions.

For more details on these recommendations and why these components are considered best practices and important to include in university sexual violence policies, please see OUSA's policy on Sexual Violence Prevention & Response (https://www.ousa.ca/policy_sexual_violence).

⁵Victoria Catherine Olive, "Sexual Assault Against Women of Color" (2012) *Journal of Student Research* 1(1), 1-9.

⁶Courage to Act: Developing a National Draft Framework to Address and Prevent Gender-Based Violence at Post-Secondary Institutions in Canada

Women's Campus Safety Grant

Women's Campus Safety Grant funding should go towards initiatives directly related to gender-based violence prevention and supports. Funds should only go to general safety or equipment in the case of insufficient project applications that directly help to decrease gender-based violence. OUSA's proposed terms of reference include awareness/education initiatives as well as services and supports. Some examples include:

- Campus safety websites and resource centres
- Supplies and promotional materials for specific campus awareness campaigns
- Hosting awareness programs, safety and/or sexual violence conferences, and courses
- Sexual Violence Prevention Training
- Campus "Walk Safe" programs
- Evaluation of evidence-informed initiatives on campus to determine if they are effective
- Salaries for training/train the trainer models
- If there are sufficient funds that are not absorbed by other initiatives for reducing gender-based violence, post-secondary institutions can continue to utilize this funding for capital investments that go towards creating environmental design that are directly related to creating a better environmental design to reduce gender-based violence

Training for Campus Security

Students who have experienced sexual violence may reach out to campus security as the first form of response. There are significant barriers to those who choose to report, especially among marginalized groups. For example racialized women are hesitant to report due to fear of not being believed, racism, and a history of negative experiences with security.⁵

A survivor-centric approach prioritizes the rights, needs, and wishes of those who have experienced sexual violence first and foremost. They aim to create environments where survivors are treated with dignity and respect, free of discrimination, given comprehensive information, empowered to make their own decisions, and have their privacy and confidentiality maintained. Taking a survivor-centric approach "puts the decision-making in the hands of the person who has been harmed so the response does not contribute to taking away further control from that person."⁶