

# A BRIGHT FUTURE addressing campus-based sexual violence



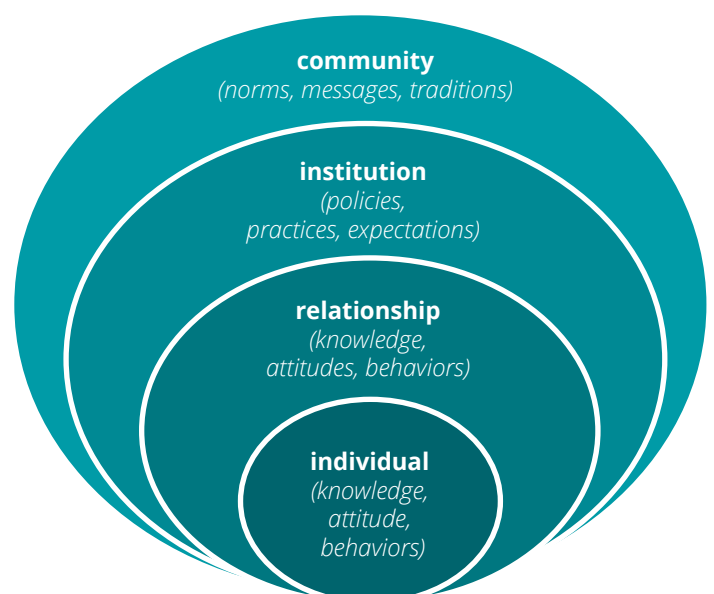
Institutions of higher learning are responsible for keeping all students safe and supporting students who report violence, while communities must also be invested in challenging harmful norms earlier in childhood and supporting accountability for individuals who exhibit problematic behaviors. **It's our shared responsibility to create safer communities.**

A large majority of people are not inherently violent or abusive – social norms supporting aggression, isolation, dehumanization, and inequity disconnect us from one another and teach us that certain types of violence are to be expected (even inevitable). These norms and attitudes are taught from a very young age and reinforced in one way or another throughout life. When young adults reach college age, they have absorbed almost two decades of harmful messaging.

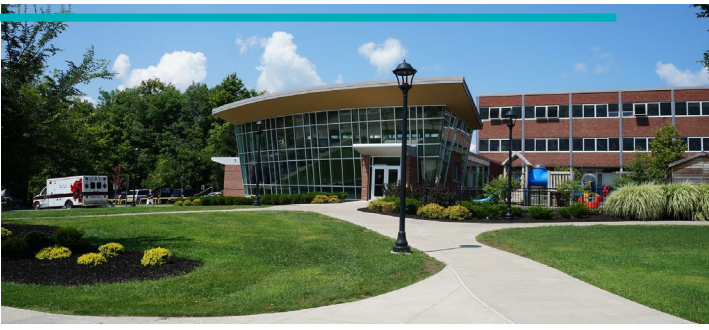
## RISK FACTORS

In order to reduce the likelihood of violence occurring, we must examine what might influence someone to act violently. There is research available to help us understand what motivates someone to sexually assault or abuse another.<sup>1 2 3</sup> These factors are not necessarily unique to college campuses, but may become exacerbated by the stress of or reaction to living independently for the first time with minimal adult guidance or intervention.

- **Holding on to or being deeply invested in traditional gender norms.** Predominant understandings of gender promote a number of limiting and damaging ideas: 1) there are only two acceptable gender identities – men and women or male and female; and 2) of those two genders, men are inherently superior to women.



*Effective change happens on multiple levels and addresses different factors within each level.*



- **A willingness to objectify or dehumanize.** Inequity and oppression teach us, through different norms and beliefs, to disconnect from one another and see others as less-than or less worthy. When this happens, it makes harming the “less-than” easier or more justifiable. People who harm others and sexually abuse often have a willingness to dehumanize as a means of justifying harassment or violence.

- **Peer group attitudes toward coercion and sex.** Groups and teams must be spaces that endorse healthy norms like connection, collectivism, and collaboration. For some groups; however, these values are thwarted by dangerous attitudes about sexual activity and relationships. Research has found that some fraternities and athletic teams have relaxed or permissive attitudes toward coerced sex or manipulating others to have sex.<sup>4</sup> They will often use physical force or alcohol to lower the likelihood of resistance.

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## WHAT CAN WE DO?

Sexual violence is preventable. We have guideposts highlighting some of the routes to meaningful individual and social change. Primary prevention seeks to increase feelings of responsibility within communities to end sexual violence and builds on awareness-raising and increased interest to engage in the intense work of attitudinal and behavioral change.

### *Connect prevention to campus values and culture*

Students and families often select schools based on culture and guiding values, such as excellence, service, community, and integrity. These resonate with folks and can be woven into prevention messaging – connecting concepts of safety and respect with overarching community values.<sup>5</sup>

This can be done in a number of ways, including:

- **Ask students, staff, and faculty what is most important to them about the campus community.** This can be done informally or as part of end-of-semester evaluations and surveys. Do members of the campus community feel strongly about a particular value or element of the schools’ mission? How do they envision the goals

being operationalized? How are these values lived out on campus in tangible or observable ways?

- **Synthesize climate survey data with values and prevention goals.** Periodical climate surveys help gauge cultural norms and attitudes on campus. People share how they feel about prevention and intervention efforts, their own experiences with sexual violence, and offer recommendations for strengthening initiatives. Changes or new projects can be presented as community-driven and as a manifestation of values.

### *Offer refreshers every year a cohort is on campus*

Because change takes time and practice, prevention efforts must be ongoing and consistent.<sup>6</sup> Individuals will need time to explore new models for behaviors and campus communities will need space to acclimate to or refine new procedures. A comprehensive and multifaceted approach includes education and awareness-raising efforts, as well as other initiatives that seek to change norms and deeply rooted beliefs that normalize violence and abuse.<sup>7,8</sup> These can be difficult to identify and uproot. Therefore, successful

programming is intentionally repetitive and includes multiple sessions for individuals to process and practice new behaviors.

Effective programming extends beyond a student or staff member's first year or semester on campus – campus community members are more likely to recall important information when they receive periodic reminders and opportunities throughout their tenure.

- Highlight elements of policies and resources in intentional email messages to students (e.g. on-campus reporting processes, prevention messages from orientation or new student presentations, contacts for off-campus resources).
- Implement annual skill-building training that addresses unique campus risk or protective factors,



Effective programming **extends beyond** a student or staff member's **first year or semester** on campus.

as well as reinforces core school values. Trainings will build off previous trainings or presentations - helping individuals connect concepts and “the bigger picture.”

- Enhance Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) and other awareness months' activities to include a longer-term engagement component – allowing individuals to take action once they have been made aware of the problem and maintain forward momentum on behavior change.



## SAMPLE CAMPUS PREVENTION PROGRAM OUTLINE

Every campus community is unique. For assistance developing ongoing and comprehensive prevention programming on your campus, consider collaborating with local sexual violence programs and/or your state's sexual violence coalition. See below a visual that can assist you in planning.

Year One	Year Two	Year Three	Year Four	Graduate Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Second semester refresher</li> <li>• Intentional educational emails</li> <li>• SAAM / awareness month event promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills training</li> <li>• Intentional educational emails</li> <li>• SAAM / awareness month event promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills training</li> <li>• Intentional educational emails</li> <li>• SAAM / awareness month event promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skills training</li> <li>• Intentional educational emails</li> <li>• SAAM / awareness month event promotion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orientation</li> <li>• Gender-based violence / power-based personal violence seminar</li> <li>• SAAM / awareness month event promotion</li> </ul>

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## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup>Tharp A.T., DeGue S., Valle L.A., Brookmeyer K.A., Massetti G.M., Matjasko J.L. (2013). "A systematic qualitative review of risk and protective factors for sexual violence perpetration." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, (14/2):133-167.

<sup>2</sup>Wilkins, N., Tsao, B., Hertz, M., Davis, R., Klevens, J. (2014). *Connecting the Dots: An Overview of the Links Among Multiple Forms of Violence*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Oakland.

<sup>3</sup>Van Brunt, B., Murphy, A., & O'Toole, M.E. (2015). "The Dirty Dozen: Twelve risk factors for sexual violence on college campuses (DD-12)." *Violence & Gender*, (2/3), 1-16.

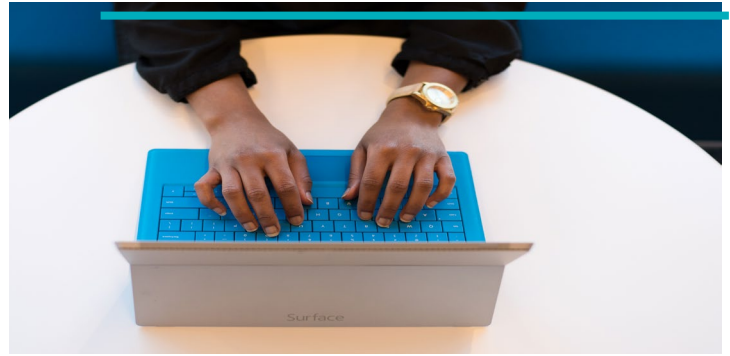
<sup>4</sup>Tharp et al.

<sup>5</sup>National Sexual Violence Resource Center. (2015). *10 Principles of Effective Prevention Messaging*. Harrisburg, PA: National Sexual Violence Resource Center. Retrieved from <https://www.nsvrc.org/publications/nsvrc-publications/10-principles-effective-prevention-messaging>.

<sup>6</sup>Dills, Fowler, & Payne. -

<sup>7</sup>Dills J, Fowler D, & Payne G. (2016). *Sexual Violence on Campus: Strategies for Prevention*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/campusvprevention.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>Underwood, J. (2016). *Safety & Justice for all: Best practice for Virginia campuses addressing gender-based violence*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Sexual & Domestic Violence Action Alliance. Retrieved from <https://www.communitysolutionsva.org//index.php/resources/item/best-practices-guides-for-va-campus>



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The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide organization representing 21 county-based rape crisis centers and Rutgers University's Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. NJCASA elevates the voice of survivors and service providers through advocacy, training, and support for efforts to create safer communities for all women, men and children.

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against sexual assault