

ACTION PLAN FOR STUDENTS:

Six steps for effective student leadership to address college sexual assault.

#1 Create a Sustainable Movement

Student organization members and officers change frequently. Because of this, it can be difficult to maintain momentum among your college student group. However, it is critical that as student advocates, you create a sustainable campus movement if you want to effectively address college sexual assault. To create this sustainability, consider ways to:

- **Create a system to successfully transfer knowledge from current organization members to incoming members.** Look at how other organizations have done this and adopt successful knowledge transfer models.
- **Identify and cultivate allies and partners.** Seek groups and individuals who share similar goals and experiences addressing gender-based violence. Such groups could include community groups, faculty members, or other student organizations.
- **Develop a strategic plan.** Lay out the organization's goals and action strategies. Be sure to include the objectives, promotional tactics, ways in which you intend to keep the administration accountable, and future steps in this strategic plan.
- **Document and store materials.** Keep a record (digital and hardcopy) of all materials and processes created by the organization. Additionally, store any relevant information regarding sexual assault on campus. This way, members, particularly incoming members, have a clearinghouse of data they can easily access.

#2 Know Your University's Sexual Assault Policies

Three pieces of legislation—[Title IX](#), [The Clery Act](#), and [The Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\)](#)—govern the rules about sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking in higher education. For great information on what these laws mean, go to KnowyourIX.org.

Many college and universities have implemented new policies and procedures, and some are just beginning that process.

Find out who is in charge of overseeing these policies and procedures on your campus. All colleges must designate a Title IX Coordinator who understands the federal law and can handle sensitive issues related sexual assault. By familiarizing your members with policies and key people, your organization will be able to identify whom to speak with when issues of college sexual assault arise.

#3 Understand Your Numbers

College campuses are required to collect gender-based violence data. Examine and absorb these numbers as campus-based data is fundamental to creating prevention and accountability programming specific to universities' needs. Remember, however, that acts of violence on campus are often underreported. This means that it will be impossible to fully quantify the incidence of sexual assault on campus. Encourage your administrators to engage in an annual climate survey that seeks candid and thorough data.



#4 Listen to Other Students and Build Narratives

Stories move people. They also help put a "face" to data, such as campus-based statistics on sexual assault. To gather stories, strive to create a safe space where those interested in the subject and/or wanting to share their story can come and talk. Be mindful that such conversations may trigger strong emotional responses among students. Always emphasize anything shared with the organization is confidential unless otherwise authorized.

Additionally, make sure to talk to those who might not be initially interested in the subject of college sexual assault. Identify these people and find out what they think about the issue. Do they think it is an important issue, a non-issue, or even over reported? Understand their position to determine which stories and campus-based data will best motivate these individuals into action.

#5 Create a Media Strategy

As part of your student group, strive to develop a thorough communication plan that defines your communication goals, messaging, and tactics to affect implementation of programming and/or raise awareness about college sexual assault. This plan should include the media tools (e.g. website, Facebook, Twitter), key talking points, and strategies to educate and build relationships with student and local media that your group intends to use.

However, be aware that while journalists can help your student group get your message heard, it is impossible to control what they print or say. Consider designating a spokesperson to ensure messaging is clear and that college sexual assault victims are not blamed.

#6 Identify Self-Care Mechanisms

Anti-violence work is stressful. Acknowledge this and work to create an environment that encourages self check-ins and mental health awareness among your members. And celebrate any organizational victory—no matter how small it appears. All efforts to reduce campus sexual assault deserve recognition and reward.



For more than 30 years, Futures Without Violence has led the way and set the pace in innovative educational programs, public action campaigns, policy development, and leaders' training designed to end violence against women, children, and families around the world. Instrumental in developing the landmark Violence Against Women Act passed by the U.S. Congress in 1994, Futures Without Violence has established an International Conference Center that will engage today's diverse national and global leaders, stand with survivors, and continue working to break the silence around gender-based violence. Learn more <http://www.futureswithoutviolence.org>.

