

Inventory and analysis of sexual assault policy and protocol at North Carolina colleges and universities

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Abstract

Objective: During the August 2009-May 2010 academic year, research was undertaken as part of North Carolina's Ten Year Plan to Prevent Intimate Partner Violence, a CDC-funded DELTA Project initiative. The goal was to assess the intimate partner and sexual violence [IPV/SV] policies and protocol for NC's 52 public and private institutions of higher education [IHE].

Methodology: Information was collected from each IHE's student handbooks or codes of conduct, as well as from student affairs or student services websites; this method was used because information accessibility was a key criterion. The information was then assessed using a model "Sexual Assault Response Policy and Protocol" identified and approved by a statewide steering committee working with the DELTA Project.

Results: In general, no IHE met all of the criteria for review. Three IHEs had no accessible SV/SA policy and seven IHEs had sexual harassment policies only. In addition, no IHE had an IPV-specific policy. Factors that showed an IHE's commitment to IPV/SV prevention include providing an inclusive definition of sexual misconduct, resources for survivors, and on-campus IPV/SV prevention programming. Factors that needed improvement include not explicitly assuring confidentiality, including consensual sex in a definition of sexual misconduct, and not providing IPV prevention programming or policies.

Conclusions: In order to increase factors that demonstrate a commitment to prevention, each IHE is urged to engage in a university-wide effort that may include adopting a gender-neutral IPV/SV policy that encourages reporting and bystander intervention, ensuring information accessibility and/or convening a campus-wide coalition to support these efforts.

Background

The **DELTA Project** is a CDC-funded initiative committed to the primary prevention of intimate partner violence [IPV]. Efforts in North Carolina are coordinated by the **North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence** and the **North Carolina DELTA State Steering Committee**.

Goal: To "increase IPV prevention and healthy relationship building programming and policies within post-secondary educational institutions" (NCCADV, 2009, p. 59)

Activities:

- Review and determine model sexual assault policies and protocol, and programming
- Create an inventory of sexual assault and intimate partner violence policies, protocol, and programming for North Carolina colleges and universities
- Determine areas for improvement and next steps for action

Criteria for Review

The criteria was identified by members of the DELTA and EMPOWER State Steering Committees:

- Definition of "sexual assault"
- Design for the sexual assault/violence policy*
- Provisions for training members of the campus community*
- Methods that support/facilitate student reporting*
- Prevention efforts and resources for victims/survivors*
- Identification of methods and policies that prevent reporting*
- Annual evaluation of students' knowledge of the sexual assault/violence policy and protocol*
- Guidelines for investigating and punishing perpetrators*
- Presence of IPV prevention programming and/or policies

* Adapted from Pasky McMahon (2008)

Methodology

Inclusion Criteria:

- Public non-community college university under the jurisdiction of the University of North Carolina system OR
- Private not-for-profit institution member of the North Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities

Review Procedure:

Information was gathered and reviewed from multiple locations. This method was used because accessibility of information was a key criterion of review.

- Student Handbooks
- Student Codes of Conduct
- Sexual Assault Response policies or protocol
- College or university websites for various student services

Inventory At-A-Glance

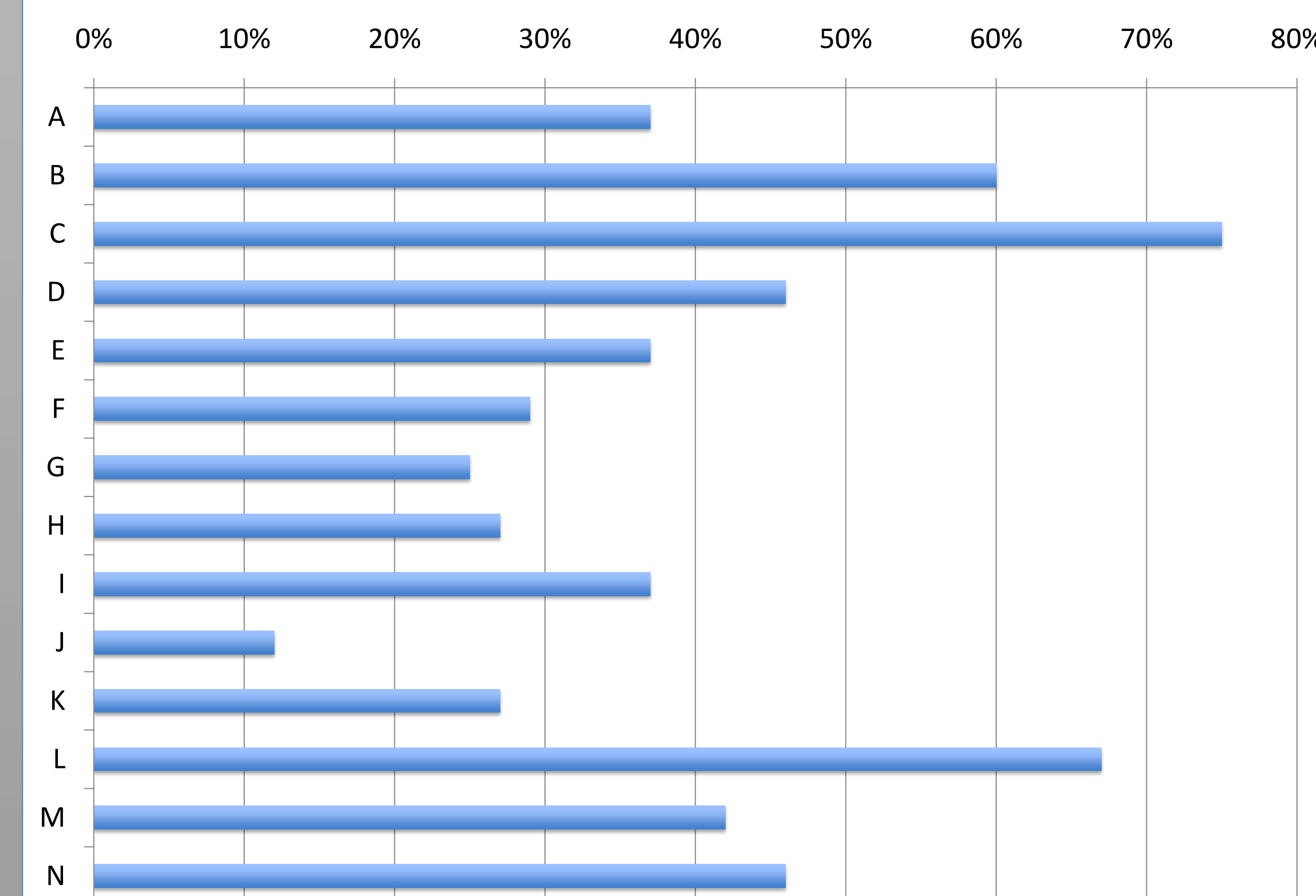
Table 1. Demographic Information (n=52)

Category	Number	Percent
Public IHEs	37	71%
Private IHEs	15	29%
Historically Black colleges and universities	10	19%
Female-only IHEs	4	8%
IHEs with no publicized sexual assault policy	3	6%
IHEs with a sexual harassment policy only	7	13%

Factors Showing Commitment to IPV and SV/SA Prevention (see Chart 1)

- Policy with a comprehensive definition of sexual misconduct that defines concepts acquaintance rape, gang rape, stalking, sexual exploitation, and sexual assault
- A statement of commitment to SV/SA prevention
- Protocol that provides information for victims or survivors
- Outlines an institutional response from campus entities
- SV/SA awareness programming
- SV/SA prevention programming
- IPV prevention and/or healthy relationship programming
- Full-time staff committed in part or in full to on-campus IPV and SV/SA awareness and prevention
- Anonymous reporting for bystanders and survivors
- Alcohol policy immunity for bystanders and survivors
- Judicial procedures for the punishment of perpetrators
- The presence of general judicial procedures
- Procedures for the investigation of sexual misconduct
- Sanctions specific to sexual misconduct

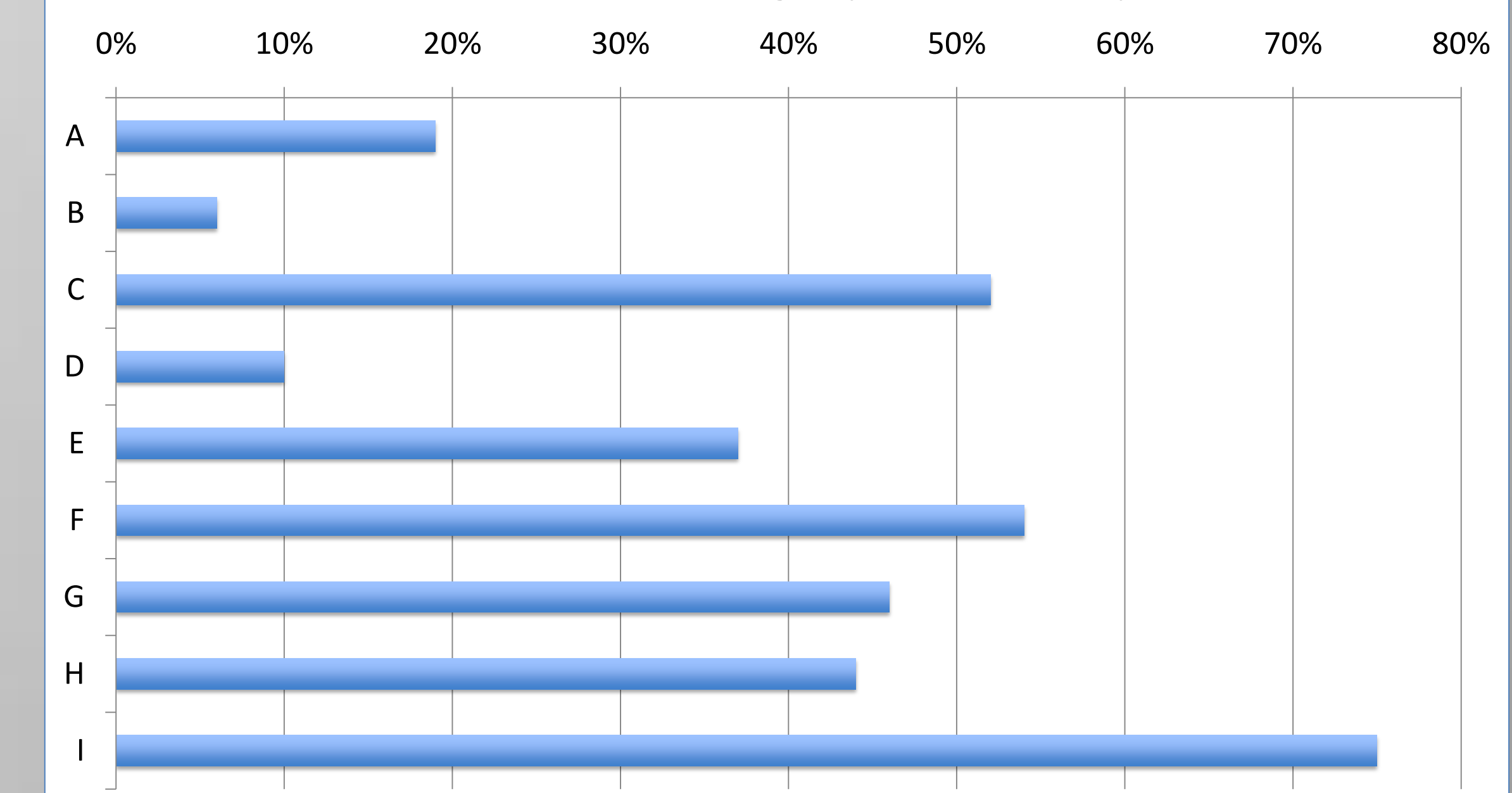
Chart 1. Percent of IHEs Showing Commitment to Prevention



Areas Needing Improvement (see Chart 2)

- No readily accessible or available policy or EEOC-related sexual harassment policy only
- Inclusion of consensual sex as a punishable offense
- No definition of "consent" in sexual misconduct policy
- "Consent" mentioned briefly or no expanded definition
- No explicit assurance of confidentiality in policy
- Does not provide health information for survivors
- Does not provide mental health and/or counseling information for survivors
- No protocol for handling sexual assault on campus or the role and/or responsibility of specific departments
- Does not have IPV-prevention programming

Chart 2. Percent of IHEs Needing Improvement in Specific Areas



Recommendations and Conclusions

No IHE met all of the criteria, so each should follow one or more of the following recommendations

- Adopt a **gender-neutral** and **LGBTQ-inclusive** policy
- Include provisions that encourage reporting, like **anonymous reporting** or **alcohol/drug policy immunity**
- Provide educational **bystander intervention** programming
- **Include intimate partner violence** alongside sexual misconduct prevention and awareness programming
- **Ensure online accessibility** of SV/SA and IPV response protocol for students, staff, faculty, and first responders
- **Convene a campus-wide coalition** or planning body to support the development and implementation of new and existing policies, protocol, programming, and resources

References

- North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence [NCCADV]. (2009). NC 10 year plan to prevent intimate partner violence. CDC Publication # 5US4CE4224866-06.
- Pasky McMahon, P. (2008). Sexual violence on the college campus: A template for compliance with federal policy. *Journal of American College Health*, 57(3), 361-365.

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