

# Miami Herald

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## **Partyers get sobering message on rape awareness; State health officials are putting rape-awareness info on free calling cards being passed to students on spring break.**

By Erica Rodriguez, Herald Writer

[TALLAHASSEE] – As thousands of college students migrate to Florida this month for the annual partying binge known as Spring Break, the Florida Department of Health has a little gift for them: a free 15-minute calling card that gives them a 20-second rape awareness message before each call.

“If you or someone you know has been a victim of sexual assault, confidential help is available from a hot line counselor,” the voice says.

The calling cards are part of a \$48,000 effort by state health officials to increase awareness among spring breakers that sex and alcohol can be a dangerous combination and to let rape victims know where to go for help.

“Spring break is a time when some students drink more alcohol and are in unfamiliar environments, both of which can add to the risk of sexual assault,” said Nancy Humbert, women’s health officer for the Department of Health.

Florida health officials are distributing 100,000 telephone calling cards on key rings to college students in partnership with the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence.

About half the cards were distributed this year to Florida universities. Participating hotels and radio stations in the spring break hot spots of Daytona, Panama City, Key West and Miami Beach will distribute the remaining 50,000 cards throughout the month. Fort Lauderdale is no longer considered a spring break mecca and won’t be part of the distribution.

The recorded message gives callers information in English and Spanish about sexual violence prevention and toll-free numbers for local rape crisis centers that offer confidential victim services and prevention education. The cards also have hot line numbers on them.

The state paid 48 cents per card with money from the federal Centers for Disease Control’s rape

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prevention education program.

According to the Florida Department of Law Enforcement's Uniform Crime Report Defense Data, about 80 percent of sexual assaults occur while either the victim or the perpetrator is under the influence of drugs or alcohol. The Journal of American College Health reports an increase in alcohol consumption by college students while on spring break – the average male drinks 18 drinks a day and females drink 10.

The Miami Beach Police Department is promoting rape awareness and prevention by enhancing its patrol division and distributing educational fliers in the city's entertainment district during the spring break season, Friday through March 28, spokesman Robert Hernandez said.

Police records show that four of the 38 reported rapes committed last year in Miami Beach occurred during spring break.

The number of sexual batteries that go unreported is not known.

"We always encourage victims to come forward by advising them that they can prevent someone else from falling prey to this person," Hernandez said.

Will the calling cards work?

Florida State University student Kristine Lubian, who plans to spend spring break in Miami, said she thinks it's a good idea for young people who may find themselves in a difficult situation, but she doesn't think she will need the calling card minutes. She uses her cellphone.

For information on how to get the card, contact [www.fcasv.org](http://www.fcasv.org) or call the Department of Health's sexual violence prevention program at 888-956-RAPE.

*Herald staff writer Tina Cummings contributed to this report.*

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