



# 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

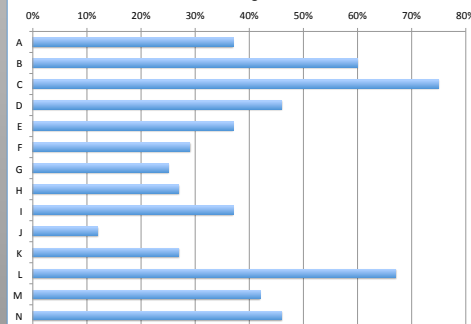
Table 1. Demographic Information (n=52)

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

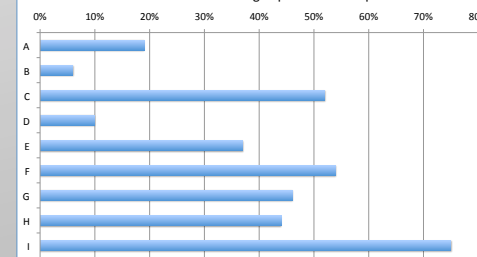
Chart 1. Percent of IHEs Showing Commitment to Prevention



## 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 # S54CE4224866-06.

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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