

Prevention & Response Support for Community Colleges

Despite markedly higher rates of sexual violence, community colleges are often left behind when it comes to prevention and response research, which traditionally focuses on four-year institutions. This brief outlines recent research conducted by Prevention Innovations Research Center which focuses on community colleges.

Overview

The serious public health problem of sexual violence (i.e., sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, and sexual harassment) at four-year US colleges and universities is well documented. However, until recently, little has been known about the prevalence of sexual violence among community college students.

For that reason, PIRC researchers and practitioners used a grant from the US Dept. of Health and Human Services to collaborate and provide technical assistance to build the capacities of New Hampshire non-residential and community colleges to prevent and respond to sexual violence on their campuses.

In addition to working towards building partnerships and strengthening community college prevention and response efforts, the project resulted in six peer-reviewed papers to examine the understudied area of sexual violence perpetrated against community college students.

Key Takeaways

Unlike students attending traditional four-year colleges, community college students spend less time on their campus and are more likely to balance their studies with family and work responsibilities.

The findings reported in the six papers cited (Page 2) reveal high rates of sexual violence victimization among the community college student population and demonstrate the importance of providing support for students who are experiencing violence in their homes and communities.

Furthermore, community college students who identified as LGBTQ reported higher rates of sexual violence perpetrated against them than their peers who identified as heterosexual. Approximately 64% of LGBTQ students reported some form of sexual violence since they enrolled at their community college, compared with 43% of heterosexual student participants.

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Recommendations

These recent studies highlight the need for community college leaders to support sexual violence survivors and increase their sexual violence prevention efforts to help stop violence before it happens. To ease budgetary issues, community college administrators within geographic proximity can work together and share the cost of prevention efforts, including programming and trainings. Additionally, administrators should build relationships with community-based health resources and local crisis centers who can facilitate prevention trainings on campus and respond to students when they are victimized.

Community College Research

- Moschella EM, Potter SJ, Moynihan MM (2020). [Disclosure of Sexual Violence Victimization and Anticipated Social Reactions among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Community College Students](#). *Journal of Bisexuality*, 20(1), 66-85
- Potter SJ, Moschella EM, Moynihan MM and Smith D (2020). [A Collaborative Community College Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Effort: Climate Study Results to Assess Impact](#). *Violence Against Women*. (DOI: 10.1177/1077801220969894).
- Potter SJ, Moschella EM, Moynihan MM and Smith D (2020). [Sexual Violence Among LGBTQ Community College Students: A Comparison with their Heterosexual Peers](#). *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*. 44: 787-803.
- Potter SJ, Fox N, Smith D, Draper N, Moschella E and MM Moynihan (2020). [Sexual Assault Prevalence and Community College Students: Challenges and promising practices](#). *Health Education & Behavior*, 47:75-165.
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- Howard R, Potter SJ, Guedj C and Moynihan MM (2018). [Sexual Violence Victimization among Community and Non-Residential College Students](#). *American Journal of College Health*. 67:674-687.

About the Author

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