



IT'S TIME TO TAKE ACTION: To Prevent Sexual Violence On College Campuses

Our campuses are in crisis. The chance of a woman being sexually assaulted during college is about the same as her chance of [catching the flu](#) during an average year. Sexual assault has lasting effects on students. If this statistic troubles you, [know that you can take action!](#)

STEP 1: KNOW THE ISSUE

Under United States federal law, most notably [Title IX](#) and the [Clery Act](#), students are guaranteed a right to education free from sexual violence and harassment. While Title IX is traditionally known for providing equity in athletic programs at schools, it covers all realms of gender equity and prohibits sex-based discrimination in education, including discrimination against [pregnant and parenting students](#) and [women in STEM programs](#), and sexual harassment which includes sexual violence.

In the case such violence *does* occur, colleges and universities are required to respond to the various needs of survivors, which sometimes includes providing accommodations such as changes to academic schedules, housing arrangements, and campus employment. In addition, schools are supposed to provide health (including mental health) services and referral as well as other supportive services. Colleges and universities must have grievance procedures in place for survivors to take disciplinary action against their assailants. *And every school must have a Title IX Coordinator who manages complaints.* The Coordinator's contact information should be publicly accessible on the school's website and, starting this year, will be required to be reported to the Department of Education.

What rights do survivors of campus sexual violence have?

Colleges must publish the victim's rights and the college's responsibilities:

- Information on obtaining orders of protection, no contact orders, etc.
- Information on how the college will protect the confidentiality of the victim.
- Written notification of available services for mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, and other available community resources.
- Written notification about a victims' right to change academic, living, transportation, or work situations *even if they do not formally report a crime.*
- Written explanation of a student or employee's rights and options, *regardless of whether the crime took place on campus or off campus.*

Colleges must publish the procedures for reporting sexual violence:

- Information on how to preserve evidence of the crime.
- Information on to whom and how to formally report the incident.
- *The right to decline formally reporting to authorities.*



STEP 2: MOBILIZE AND PLAN – you now have an issue that you’re passionate about. Find others who are as passionate as you, and develop an action plan.

- Do your homework – make sure you understand [Title IX](#) and [Know Your Rights on Campus](#). Let AAUW’s [Talking Points Memo](#) help you.
- Review your institution’s [Title IX policy](#) - is it visible on the institution’s website? Is it visible around campus? Is the faculty trained to identify Title IX violations? Is your institution in complete compliance with these requirements?
 - If you answered “no” to any of these questions – you have your [first action item!](#)
- Check out the school’s annual security report, which has a lot of details about services available, prevention training on campus, and the school disciplinary proceedings.
- Develop a personal story – why is this issue so important to you?
- Talk to friends, family and parents, fellow students, faculty and staff, other student groups on campus. Ask them to give you 10 minutes on the agenda at their next meeting.
- If your college is a [C/U partner member](#) of AAUW:
 - Share your interests with your AAUW C/U Rep. on campus
 - Create an AAUW [student organization](#) on campus
 - Join AAUW as an [E-student affiliate \(E-SAF\)](#) – *for free* – so you will have access to all of our resources and staff.
 - Attend the [National Conference for College Women Student Leaders \(NCCWSL\)](#) to connect with fellow student leaders from across the country.
- Build coalitions – join forces with student groups and sports teams who want to support your cause.
- Find out what other colleges in your area are doing.
- Look for local community groups – like your [local AAUW Branch!](#) – who are focusing on this issue. What resources do they have available to you.
- [Host a House Meeting](#) in the dining hall, a conference room, or in a classroom. Invite people to an informational session to learn and talk about the issues. Gauge their interest, capacity to help, and unique skillsets.

STEP 3: ADVOCATE – advocacy is defined as engaging in dialogue about an issue one cares about. The most important part of being a good advocate, is to clearly articulate “the ask.” What is your position on a particular issue, and what are you asking people to do?

- You’ve mobilized a core group of people who are as passionate as you are, and ready to fight for change. Now, what and how do we need to change?
- For starters, here is a list (as of July, 2014) of colleges and universities in New York State, released by the [U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights \(OCR\)](#), under investigation for possible violations of federal law over the handling of sexual violence and harassment complaints. The list includes investigations opened because of complaints received by OCR and those initiated by OCR as compliance reviews, but does not indicate that a violation has occurred at this point.
 - CUNY Hunter College
 - Elmira College
 - Hobart & William Smith College
 - Sarah Lawrence College



- SUNY Binghamton
- Additionally, on October 31, 2013 [OCR announced that it had entered into an agreement with the State University of New York \(SUNY\)](#) to ensure compliance with Title IX. OCR independently initiated the investigation to review SUNY's practices to ensure that each of the 29 state-operated campuses respond promptly and effectively to allegations of sexual harassment, including sexual violence. This agreement commits all SUNY campuses to a long list of requirements, including:
 - Reexamining their policies,
 - Designating a Title IX Coordinator at each campus,
 - Seeking input from the campus community, and
 - Conducting climate surveys.
- The Department of Education has published some resources that might help you advocate, and as always states and the federal government are passing new laws and updating existing laws. Here are a few things you may want to know about:
 1. **The U.S. Department of Education's [2011 Title IX Dear Colleague Letter Guidance](#) recommends** that schools provide educational programs on sexual violence.
 2. **[NotAlone.gov](#) and [Title IX FAQ](#) published in April**
 3. **The VAWA Amendments to the Clery Act (often called the Campus SaVE Act) which was passed in 2013, requires** colleges to provide “primary prevention and awareness programs” for students and employees, as well as ongoing prevention and awareness campaigns. The information students will receive in education programs and via schools’ annual security reports must include certain subjects:
 - i. A statement by the school that it prohibits acts of sexual violence
 - ii. The definition of various acts of sexual violence
 - iii. Education on bystander intervention
 - iv. Risk reduction programs so students recognize and can avoid abusive behaviors or potential attacks
 - v. Information on the school’s reporting system and disciplinary proceedings
 - **ACTION:** Stakeholders have just come to an agreement in [negotiating regulations](#), which are needed to implement the law. Successful implementation will take input and energy from students, so meet with campus administrators now and ask what their plans are to comply.
- 4. On June 11, 2014 the New York State Senate passed [A.2089](#) **requiring colleges and universities to report all missing persons and potential violent felonies to law enforcement within 24 hours.** This bill will head to Governor Cuomo’s desk to be signed in the next few months. The legislation was inspired in large part by the case of Suzanne Lyall, a SUNY Albany student who disappeared in 1998, and strengthens the 1999 Campus Safety Act – another measure that required higher education institutions to develop processes to notify local law enforcement in such cases.
 - **ACTION:** AAUW of New York State is working with several statewide organizations to urge the legislature to modify the reporting language in this bill to more clearly define a



survivor's rights to 'opt-out' of officially reporting the crime to police. If you are interested in supporting this effort or sharing your story, contact us on Facebook: [AAUW-NYS](#) or email Donna Seymour, seymour6985@verizon.net.

5. New York State's [Women's Equality Act \(WEA\) \(A 8070\)](#) is a multi-pronged Women's Equality Agenda, originally proposed by NY State Governor Andrew Cuomo in his 2013 State of the State. The Act would update New York laws to provide stronger legal protections for women and their families. The legislation is much broader than preventing sexual violence against women. If enacted, it would achieve pay equity for women, stop sexual harassment, prevent pregnancy discrimination in the workplace and on college campuses, strengthen human trafficking laws and protections for domestic violence victims, end family status discrimination, and protect women's reproductive health by aligning New York law with federal law and state medical practice.

- **ACTION:** Urge the New York State Senate to pass the entire Women's Equality Act (WEA) to make NY laws as strong as NY women. [Sign the petition](#). Watch the [Illegal or Just Sleazy?](#) video. Tweet: @AAUWNY, @NY4Women, #UpgradeNY, #WEAreStrong. Post on Facebook: [AAUW-NYS](#) and [NYWEC](#).
- **HOW do we advocate for these changes (click [here](#) for the online toolkit):** If you believe your institution's Title IX policies are insufficient or not in compliance, you can:
 - Contact your Title IX Coordinator on campus
 - Work with your school to [change policies](#) on campus
 - [File a Title IX complaint](#) with the U.S. Department of Education to initiate an investigation into your school's policies and practices
 - [File a Title IX civil lawsuit](#) against your school
 - Use AAUW's [Legal Advocacy Fund](#) resources to ensure your rights are being protected on campus!
- Sign up for AAUW's [Action Network](#) so you receive notifications to contact your members of Congress through the [Two-Minute Activist](#).
- [Develop a petition](#) or sign-on letter – urging action on a specific issue. Plan to deliver it to your college president, or an elected official.
- [Hold a Meeting with an Elected Official](#) – and include a [Special Delivery](#) plan to deliver your petition, or other symbol of your campaign to an elected official. Be creative and draw lots of media attention!
- **Develop an Anti-violence “Pact”** – ask your college administrators to support the pact, and have students sign on, pledging to prevent sexual violence and harassment on their campus.
- [Tabling Event](#) - reserve a table in a high-traffic area on campus to raise awareness and gain support for your campaign. Have people sign your petition or pact.
- Host a [Sexual Assault Community Forum](#), Issue Forum, Town Hall, or Tele-Town Hall – with partner colleges and community organizations. Use AAUW's 2005 report [Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus](#) as the jumping-off point of the forum. Include a panel of experts, a video introduction, and real stories from the students.
- Host an on-campus brown-bag to talk about how [victim-blaming](#) occurs and how can we prevent it.



- **Plan a Rally** – to bring public attention to your issue.
- **Hold a Bystander Intervention Session** – bystanders can help prevent or stop sexual violence on campus and in other communities. Connect with programs that teach bystanders how to intervene in situations that involve sexual violence.
 - Incorporate a **Stop Street Harassment** discussion into your Bystander Intervention session. Most women and some men will face gender-based street harassment by strangers in their life. Street harassment is a form of gender violence and is often dismissed as a “joke” or a “minor annoyance.”
- Get Involved in National Campaigns:
 - **The Clothesline Project**- Survivors of violence and allies are invited to decorate a t-shirt speaking out against sexual violence and hang it amongst other t-shirts (this is a popular event on college campuses).
 - **Take Back The Night** – a national movement in which events are organized to raise awareness of sexual violence. Take part in this after-dark march that is popular on college campuses, and make a statement that women have the right to be in public at night without the risk of sexual violence.
 - **One Billion Rising For Justice** - is a global call to women survivors of violence and those who love them to gather safely in community outside places where they are entitled to justice.
 - **V-Day** – Hold a performance or a film screening to raise awareness about violence against women and girls.
 - **White Ribbon Campaign** – Wear a white ribbon, and make a personal pledge to “never commit, condone, or remain silent about violence against women and girls.”
 - **International Day against Victim-Blaming** – Use the hashtag #EndVictimBlaming on April 3, the online day of action to speak out against victim-blaming and to support survivors, and get involved through social media.
 - **Denim Day in LA and USA** – Wear jeans on April 23 to protest and raise awareness of the misconceptions that surround sexual assault. Order the **Denim Day Tool Kit**, and raise awareness in your workplace, neighborhood, or community.
- **Apply for a grant** – AAUW states and branches can apply for **Legal Advocacy Fund (LAF) Campus Outreach Grants** to receive up to \$750 to hold an event about sexual harassment or assault, pay discrimination, or Title IX on a local college or university.
- **Volunteer** – Help out at your **local rape crisis center**. If there isn't a local or campus center near you, consider volunteering at the national level with **RAINN's online hotline**.

STEP 4: SHARE YOUR MESSAGE

- Pitch your story/event to the **local media**.
- **Write an op-ed** or a **Letter to the Editor (LTE)**.
- Use AAUW's **Two-Minute Activist** to let your elected officials know where you stand.
- **Use Social Media for Advocacy** and create a **Social Media Campaign** –
 - Anti-sexual violence blogs
 - Create Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Instagram accounts (for example, use #SAAM, which stands for Sexual Assault Awareness Month, during the month of April). Host a Twitter Chat and/or a Twitter Storm. Post pictures and infographics on Instagram and Tumblr.



- Create a campaign website
- Produce and post a YouTube video
- Start an anti-sexual violence publication
- Post the AAUW video, [*You Throw Like A Girl*](#), on your social media pages.

Make sure you're sharing everything you're doing! Connect with your C/U Rep; your local, state, and national AAUW contacts; your university; your peers; and the community. We want to know what you're doing so we can support you and promote your efforts broadly.

- [AAUW Report-back Form](#). After an event, an Action (like submitting an op-ed or LTE, or launching a petition), important meeting (like meeting with an elected official), etc. take 2 minutes to complete the Report-back Form so that AAUW is aware of your activities and can celebrate your success. Don't forget to include pictures and weblinks!
- Post on [AAUW's National Facebook](#) page, and on the [AAUW-NYS Facebook](#) page.
- Use **Twitter**:
 - HANDLES: @AAUWNY, @AAUW, @AAUWPolicy, @AAUWHigherEd
 - HASHTAGS: #AAUW, #fem2, #UseThe19th, #SAAM, #1is2many, #TitleIX
- Use [AAUW's national](#) website and [AAUW-NYS's](#) website as resources.



National Contacts:

- **AAUW Manager of College/University Relationships** – Christine Hernandez, coll-univ@aauw.org
- **AAUW VP of Government Relations** – Lisa Maatz, advocacy@aauw.org

State & Local AAUW Contacts:

- **New York State President** – Edwina Martin, Staten Island Branch, edwinamartin@hotmail.com
- **New York State College/University Director** – Angela Clark-Taylor, Greater Rochester Area Branch (GRAB), angela.clark-taylor@rochester.edu
- **New York State Public Policy VP** – Donna Seymour, St Lawrence County/Empire State Virtual Branches, seymour6985@verizon.net

Important Dates to Remember:

2014

- **September 17:** [U.S. Constitution Day](#)
- **October:** Domestic Violence Awareness Month and National Bullying Prevention Month
- **October 11:** U.N. International Day of the Girl Child
- **November 12:** **Latina's Equal Pay Day**
- **November 25:** International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women
- **December 10:** Human Rights Day

2015

- **January 11:** Human Trafficking Awareness Day
- **January 29:** 6th Anniversary of the Lily Ledbetter Act – Equal Pay & Paycheck Fairness
- **February 5:** National Girls & Women in Sports Day
- **February 14:** [One Billion Rising for Justice](#) on V-Day – Calls attention to domestic violence and violence against women.
- **March:** Women's History Month
- **March 8:** International Women's Day - status of women & international issues
- **April:** Human Wrong Campaign on college campuses (Human Trafficking)
- **April:** Sexual Assault Awareness Month
- **April 14:** Equal Pay Day

The American Association of University Women (AAUW) empowers women and girls through advocacy, education, philanthropy, and research. Our nonpartisan, nonprofit organization has nearly 16,000 members and supporters in New York State – more than 170,000 across the United States – as well as 1,000 local branches and more than 800 college and university partners. Learn more and join us at www.aauw.org. You can also follow us on Twitter ([@AAUWNY](https://twitter.com/AAUWNY)) and on Facebook (www.facebook.com/AAUW.NYS).