

Texas colleges surveyed on sexual assault resources

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While research consistently estimates that one in every four women in higher education will experience rape or attempted rape during their college careers, limited proactive approaches to address the issue are found on Texas college campuses, according to the Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University.

A study of 74 two-and four-year institutions of higher education in Texas, published by the Crime Victims' Institute, found that while campuses have made strides in addressing sexual assault, efforts continue to be necessary to prevent and respond to the issue. The report was distributed to the Texas State Legislature.

On a positive note, most campuses offer health services, law enforcement, and safety infrastructure, but many fall short on counseling services, victim advocacy, educational [prevention](#), awareness raising efforts, men's programs and bystander intervention, the report said.

"Knowing what is currently being offered to students and student victims on Texas college campuses gives us the unique opportunity to augment what is already being done," said Cortney Franklin, one of the authors of the report. "Universities have traditionally put the onus of prevention on the victim, with less attention on promoting education that instructs would-be perpetrators about why it is inappropriate to coerce sex from women."

According to the Uniform Crime Report in 2011, 45 forcible rapes were reported on the 74 public and private campuses included in the study, with more than half of the colleges reporting no forcible rapes that year. Projections based on reporting practices would estimate, however, that approximately 563 students were sexually victimized that year but did not come forward to authorities, a stark figure that doesn't include those exploited through the use of alcohol.

Here are some of the major findings from the study, "Sexual Assault Resource Availability on Texas Higher Education Campuses."

- 81 percent of campuses offered counseling services, but only three provided rape crisis or victim advocacy centers on campus, with 15 percent offering resource centers for women and only one campus offering a resource center for men.
- While 75 percent of college campuses in Texas provide alcohol prevention programs to warn students against the perils of overconsumption, only seven campuses require mandatory sexual assault prevention programs and one in five campuses among those surveyed have no [sexual assault](#) prevention programs.
- Few prevention programs target men or encourage bystanders to intervene, despite demonstrated success of such programs in changing behaviors, including encouraging empathy among men and women who have the power to stop violence.
- Many campuses are relying on strategies that prevent students from becoming easy targets, such as blue light emergency phones, escort service, changes in landscaping and self-defense, but taken alone, these strategies are less likely to be successful than when combined with prevention techniques and educational campaigns.
- 71 percent of all campuses provide on-site health clinics and nearly three-quarters of those offer woman's wellness exams, although only 15 percent of the campuses are staffed with an OB-GYN physician.

More information: The full report is available at www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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