

Responding to Sexual Assault on Campus: Website Checklist

Justice and Gender-Based Violence Research Initiative

Sexual violence, sexual harassment, domestic violence, and stalking are widespread on today's college campuses.

In the U.S., as many as one in four women experience sexual assault during their college career. The latest AAU Campus Climate Survey Study found that 13% of students experienced nonconsensual sexual contact by physical force or inability to consent since enrolling at their current institution – this includes 26% of undergraduate women, 10% of graduate women, 7% of undergraduate men, 2.5% of graduate men, 23% of transgender and queer undergraduates, and 14.5% of transgender and queer graduate students. In addition, 19% of students experienced sexual harassment since enrolling at their current institution, 10% experienced non-sexual intimate partner violence and 6% experienced stalking. A primary resource for support for students who experience sexual violence, as well as those who they may tell who can help them, is the institution's website.¹

A website is a critical part of providing a transparent, fair, and equitable response to campus sexual violence. When high quality, it provides victims, those accused, and those working to support them with the information they need to make important decisions about reporting, self-care, and participation in any investigative or adjudicatory processes. To be helpful, **information must be accurate, up-to-date, complete, comprehensive, and easy to locate and understand**. This can be particularly helpful for students, who whether they are victims, accused, or a bystander are accessing this information at a stressful juncture in their lives. For victims, information has been identified as a critical need.² Finally, all institutions of higher education that receive federal funds (including financial aid for students) are required to have a public provision of information regarding the institution's programs, policies, and procedures related to sexual violence. A high-quality website satisfies this requirement.

We developed this website checklist because of how important it is for students to have clear and accessible information about their institution's policy and process to respond to campus sexual assault. The goal of the checklist is to aid institutions in designing and maintaining user-friendly website content related to the prevention and response to sexual violence. This grew out of our recent research, [Responding to Sexual Assault on Campus](#), including the project's [review of 969 college and university websites](#). We partnered with undergraduate students to conduct that review, to help better understand college and university websites from a student user perspective.

This document is comprised of three parts.

Part One: Website design guidelines for website information related to sexual violence and the institution's prevention and response efforts.

Part Two: Semester review guidelines for regular maintenance of the website.

Part Three: Website checklist to outline what information should be included on the website.

¹ Cantor, D., Fisher, B. Chibnall, S., Harps, S., Townsend, R., Thomas, G., Lee, H., Kranz, V., Herbison, R., & Madden, K. (2019, October; Revised 2020, January). Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Misconduct. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Universities (AAU). Retrieved on June 15, 2020 from [https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7_\(01-16-2020_FINAL\).pdf](https://www.aau.edu/sites/default/files/AAU-Files/Key-Issues/Campus-Safety/Revised%20Aggregate%20report%20%20and%20appendices%201-7_(01-16-2020_FINAL).pdf)

² International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2007). Enhancing law enforcement response to victims: A 21st century approach. Alexandria, VA: IACP.

This document is a modified checklist from the report authored by [Williams, Pattavina, Cares, Stein, 2020](#).

PART ONE: Website design guidelines for colleges and universities



Have a link to sexual assault resources on the main institution web page

- Use inclusive language to make clear the policies, process, programs, and resources that apply and are available to all students, regardless of their background
- Gather all information or links to all information to include on one main sexual assault resources web page
- Make full information available on the public access website and within any password access systems, such as campus portals
- Use graphics when possible to illustrate processes, but always accompany with a narrative description
- Whenever possible, make information available on the web page, not as part of a pdf
- When use of pdfs is necessary, ensure the pdf is searchable
- If the pdf is long or has multiple sections, ensure there is a live table of contents included, so users can click on a section title in the table of contents and be taken directly to that section of the document



Use a Google powered search box for searching the institution website as it better accommodates misspellings and non-exact search terms

- Ensure that the web content is viewable across different platforms (computers, tablets, and phones) and web browsers
- Make sure resources (on and off campus) are clearly designated as confidential or not confidential
- Make sure long documents include a live table of contents
- When a web page is long and requires substantial scrolling, include a guide to sections at the beginning with relevant hyperlinks for users to jump to sections of interest



Ensure that information on the website related to prevention and response to sexual violence is formatted such that it is compatible with accessibility software for those with visual and other impairments, such as a text reader program

- Work with the institution's IT and/or marketing departments to assist in these efforts
- Designate someone, preferably a student, to review the website information related to sexual violence prevention and response efforts before the start of every semester

PART TWO: Review website each semester for accordance with guidelines and checklist



Check all hyperlinks, both internal and external

- Verify phone numbers, locations, and names for all on and off campus resources
- Ensure that the most recent policy information is linked to or included on the page
- Do a search on the website using the terms rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking to ensure that users can easily locate resources and applicable policies

PART THREE: Website checklist

Below is a checklist of the content we recommend including on an institution’s website to provide victims, those accused, and support people in their lives with high quality and comprehensive information to guide their decision-making and help them access appropriate support resources.

Support Resources

Check

<p>Resources available for victims on and off campus, including if the resource is confidential and details such as names, phone numbers, office location, emails, websites, costs, and specific services provided, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling and mental health services <input type="checkbox"/> Health services <input type="checkbox"/> Locations to receive forensic sexual assault exams <input type="checkbox"/> Victim advocacy services <input type="checkbox"/> Legal assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Other services (e.g., disability services, LGBTQ services, academic support, service for international students) 	
<p>Resources available for accused students on and off campus, including if the resource is confidential and details such as names, phone numbers, office location, emails, websites, costs, and specific services provided, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Counseling and mental health services <input type="checkbox"/> Health services <input type="checkbox"/> Legal assistance <input type="checkbox"/> Other services (e.g., disability services, LGBTQ services, academic support, service for international students) 	
<p>List of supportive measures offered by the institution available to victims and accused students</p>	
<p>Advice to victims on steps to take after the incident, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> The importance of preserving evidence <input type="checkbox"/> How to report to Title IX <input type="checkbox"/> How to report to campus and local police 	
<p>Information on obtaining and enforcing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Campus issued no contact orders* <input type="checkbox"/> Off-campus civil and criminal restraining orders* 	

* Orders can be temporary or permanent, and there are different types that vary by state and can be referred to as restraining orders, protective orders, stay away orders, no contact orders and more.

General Policies & Process

Check

<p>Title IX policy, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Procedures that will be followed once a report is received <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of non-discrimination statement that the institution does not discriminate on the basis of sex in education policies <input type="checkbox"/> Notice prohibiting retaliation and steps that officials at the institution will take to prevent retaliation and respond to it if it occurs 	
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PART THREE: Website checklist (contd.)

Reporting

Check

Instructions on how to report an incident of sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking to campus Title IX	
Information on how to contact a Title IX Coordinator, including: <input type="checkbox"/> Name of Title IX Coordinator(s) - not just job title <input type="checkbox"/> Email <input type="checkbox"/> Phone Number <input type="checkbox"/> Office Address	
Instructions and link to any options for anonymous reporting	
Statement that making a report to Title IX is not the same as filing a formal complaint	
Details on requests for confidentiality in the Title IX process, including: <input type="checkbox"/> How to request confidentiality <input type="checkbox"/> Who will consider the request <input type="checkbox"/> How confidentiality will be maintained	
Information on reporting sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking to law enforcement authorities, including: <input type="checkbox"/> On-campus <input type="checkbox"/> Local police <input type="checkbox"/> Assistance provided by campus authorities in reporting to law enforcement <input type="checkbox"/> Ability to opt out of reporting to law enforcement (when applicable)	

Post-Reporting & Investigations

Check

Notification that interim measures are available during investigation and adjudication	
The time frame for the investigation	
Notice that complainant and respondent can have advisors of choice present throughout the process and that this includes meetings with investigators and hearings*	
List of options that may be implemented as a part of interim measures during investigation and adjudication	
Information on how to request accommodations including changes to: <input type="checkbox"/> Academic arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Living arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation arrangements <input type="checkbox"/> Sports and other student activities <input type="checkbox"/> Work schedules and assignments	
Descriptions of the disciplinary proceedings under Title IX policy, including procedures that will be followed once a report is received	

* “Complainant” and “respondent” is the language often used in Title IX cases for what would often otherwise be called victim and accused.

PART THREE: Website checklist (contd.)

Adjudications & Sanctions

Check

Description of process for informal resolutions of complaints	
The standard of evidence for disciplinary proceedings	
That complainants and respondents will be notified simultaneously in writing of the outcomes of disciplinary proceedings	
List all remedies and sanctions that can be imposed after a finding of responsibility	

Appeals

Check

<p>Procedures for appeal by the complainant and respondent including:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Grounds for appeal <input type="checkbox"/> Timeline for appeal	
That complainants and respondents will be notified simultaneously in writing of the outcomes of appeals	

Prevention & Education

Check

<p>Information regarding any institution sponsored optional or mandatory prevention and education programs and trainings related to sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking including:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Links to any publicly accessible training <input type="checkbox"/> Links to any trainings requiring login	
Clery Act Annual Safety Report in full, including three years of data in the number of incidents of sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, and stalking	
Results of the Campus Climate Survey	

Definitions

Check

<p>Definitions of types of sexual and other violence:</p> <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Harassment <input type="checkbox"/> Sexual Assault <input type="checkbox"/> Dating Violence <input type="checkbox"/> Domestic Violence <input type="checkbox"/> Stalking	
Definition of what constitutes a hostile environment	
Definition of consent	
Definition and identification of pool of employees to whom reporting triggers the institution's Title IX response	
Definition and identification of Campus Security Authorities	