

The American Association of University Women advocates for “equitable climates free of harassment and bullying” as well as “freedom from violence and fear of violence in homes, schools, workplaces, and communities.” In addition, we are steadfast in our support for “vigorous enforcement of Title IX and all other civil rights laws pertaining to education.”

When campus environments are hostile because of sexual harassment, assault, or violence, students cannot learn and miss out on true educational opportunities. AAUW’s own research revealed that two-thirds of college students experience sexual harassment and nearly half of students in grades 7–12 faced sexual harassment.¹ In addition, a 2007 campus sexual assault study by the U.S. Department of Justice found that around 28 percent of women are targets of attempted or completed sexual assault while they are college students.²

Sexual Harassment in Middle and High Schools

Boys and girls are negatively affected by sexual harassment. Girls are more likely than boys to say sexual harassment caused them to have trouble sleeping, not want to go to school, or change the way they went to or home from school. Too often, these negative affects take a toll on students’ education, resulting in decreased productivity and increased absenteeism from school.

The prevalence of sexual harassment in grades 7–12 comes as a surprise to many, in part because it is rarely reported. One-half of students who were sexually harassed in the 2010–11 school year said they did nothing afterward in response to sexual harassment.³

Sexual Violence in Higher Education

A college education is increasingly becoming a prerequisite for many career paths and for lifelong economic security. Sexual harassment and violence on campus disrupts the college experience in large and small ways. A campus environment that encourages—even tolerates—harassment and violence and that discourages reporting these

behaviors undermines the emotional, intellectual, and professional growth of millions of young adults.

Sexual assault disproportionately affects college women and impedes their ability to participate fully in campus life. Educational equity for women and girls requires fair, responsive, fully developed campus sexual assault policies, knowledgeable administrators, and, ultimately, an end to sexual violence on campuses.

Title IX

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 is the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education. Title IX protects students from unlawful sexual harassment in all of a school’s programs or activities, whether they take place in the facilities of the school, at a class or training program sponsored by the school at another location, or elsewhere. Title IX protects both male and female students from sexual harassment, regardless of who the harasser may be.⁴

Title IX requires schools to evaluate their current practices, adopt and publish a policy against sex discrimination, and implement grievance procedures providing for prompt and equitable resolution of student and employee discrimination complaints. Sex discrimination includes sexual violence.

Under Title IX schools are required to eliminate sexual harassment or sexual violence, prevent its recurrence, and address its impacts.⁵ The law and guidance issued by the Department of Education requires schools to:

- Define sex discrimination (including sexual violence) and publish a policy stating that the school does not discriminate.
- Have and make known procedures for students to file complaints when sexual harassment, discrimination, or violence takes place.
- Appoint a Title IX coordinator to oversee these activities, review complaints, and deal with patterns or systemic problems (even when there are not formal complaints). The school must notify students who the coordinator is.

The Clery Act

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (Clery Act) requires colleges and universities who participate in federal financial aid programs to disclose campus crime statistics and security information.⁶ Every school provides this information publicly.⁷ Currently, sexual assaults that are reported to local law enforcement are included in these disclosures.

In 2013, Congress reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and included provisions to improve campus safety. Schools will be required to report additional crime statistics (on domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking), update procedures following an incident of sexual violence, and provide prevention and bystander intervention training.

These new requirements are in addition to the longstanding obligations that schools have under Title IX. These laws can work together to ensure that students have the information they need

regarding campus safety, as well as a clear course of action when sexual violence occurs.

Next Steps to End Sexual Violence

AAUW led the charge to include campus sexual violence elimination provisions in the VAWA reauthorization in 2013. As this new law is implemented, schools must step up and work to change the culture on their campuses. One way to make strides is to implement a climate and victimization survey to better understand reported and unreported incidents, as well as contributing cultural issues on campus.

AAUW also supports increased enforcement by the Department of Education and Department of Justice, and additional support for schools to educate students, faculty, and staff, particularly Title IX coordinators, as well as train the appropriate administrators on the relevant laws.

Additional Resources

Know Your Rights on Campus.

American Association of University Women
www.aauw.org/what-we-do/legal-resources/know-your-rights-on-campus/

Ending Campus Sexual Assault Tool Kit.

American Association of University Women
www.aauw.org/resource/campus-sexual-assault-tool-kit/

NotAlone.gov: Together Against Sexual Assault.

The White House
www.notalone.gov/

¹ AAUW. (2006). *Drawing the Line: Sexual Harassment on Campus*. history.aauw.org/aauw-research/2006-drawing-the-line. AAUW. (2011). *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School*. www.aauw.org/research/crossing-the-line/.

² Christopher P. Krebs, Ph.D. ; Christine H. Lindquist, Ph.D. ; Tara D. Warner, M.A. ; Bonnie S. Fisher, Ph.D. ; Sandra L. Martin, Ph.D. (December 2007). *The Campus Sexual Assault (CSA) Study*, Final Report. NIJ Grant No. 2004-WG-BX-0010. www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/221153.pdf.

³ AAUW. (2011). *Crossing the Line: Sexual Harassment at School*. www.aauw.org/research/crossing-the-line/.

⁴ U.S. Department of Education. (September 2008). *Sexual Harassment: It's Not Academic*. www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocrshpam.pdf.

⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2011). *Know Your Rights: Title IX Prohibits Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Where You Go to School*. www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/title-ix-rights-201104.html.

⁶ Clery Center for Security on Campus. *Summary of The Jeanne Clery Act*. clerycenter.org/summary-jeanne-clery-act.

⁷ U.S. Department of Education. *Campus Safety and Security Data*. ope.ed.gov/security/