

Campus police officers' role in sex assault cases

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With high rates of sexual assault at colleges and universities, campus law enforcement officers are important facets of a campus' response to this crime. The Crime Victims' Institute at Sam Houston State University recognizes the central role campus law enforcement play in sexual assault response and conducted a survey to increase understanding of that role and their procedures in responding to sexual assault cases.

Research has consistently shown that college students are at higher risk of sexual assault, with the most recent estimates indicating that 20 to 25 percent of college women will experience an attempted or completed sexual assault during their college careers. Research also demonstrates that less than 5 percent of these victims will report the crime to police.

To understand the role of [campus](#) police in sexual assault cases, the Crime Victims' Institute conducted a survey of 118 [law enforcement](#) officers from colleges and universities across the state. In addition to capturing the perception of officers and departments about sexual assault cases, the report was designed to examine the role of officers in the process, collaborative efforts they are involved in, and resources provided to victims after a sexual assault incident.

While many police agencies respond to cases of sexual assault, campus police have additional federal requirements to track, respond to and prevent these crimes through the Clery Act, Title IX, and the upcoming Campus SaVE Act. Unlike municipal departments, campus police also are under the purview of campus administration, which influences the

department's resources, training, and operations.

Among the key findings of the study were:

- 72 percent of campus law enforcement officers surveyed had responded to at least one sexual assault case in their current position.
- Three-quarters of campus officers surveyed received specialized training on sexual assault, including investigation (77%), the role of alcohol and intoxication in [sexual assaults](#) (59%), and victim sensitivity training (64%).
- Officers overwhelming agreed that sexual assault was a problem at Texas colleges and universities (88%), but indicated it was less of a problem on their own campus (51%).
- Less than half of officers surveyed believe that Texas colleges and universities have effective responses to sexual assault, and only one-third of the officers believed their campus administrators took a proactive approach to the problem. Less than half of the [law enforcement officers](#) surveyed said their departments were involved in efforts to improve response to sexual assault cases.
- Seven out of 10 officers surveyed said their campuses had access to sexual assault nurse examiners, and 68 percent of their campuses offer victim services.
- 64 percent of officers surveyed said they understood the federal requirements for sexual assaults under the Clery Act, while only 44 percent said they were aware of mandates under Title IX.

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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