

Study examines response to sexual violence on campus

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To address concerns over sexual violence on college campuses, higher education institutions are required to appoint a Title IX Coordinator to investigate incidents, but few are trained to deal with the broad range of offenses the job entails, a study by the Crime Victims' Institute (CVI) at Sam Houston State University found.

The study by Nicole Wilkes and Leana Bouffard, Director of CVI, randomly surveyed 26 Title IX Coordinators at colleges and universities in Texas. Although 88 percent of coordinators were provided training on investigating sexual assault cases, less than half were trained on identifying, investigating or responding to cases involving stalking, [intimate partner violence](#), drug-facilitated sexual assault, cyberstalking and harassment, or lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender cases.

"These victimizations are each unique, and training is essential to understand the dynamics of abuse, as well as the impact of these crimes on victims and reasons for recanting or non-reporting," said Bouffard. "It is not uncommon for situations of intimate [partner violence](#) and stalking, in particular, to have a risk of lethality."

The federal government has three mandates for colleges on the response, prevention and reporting of gender-based violence, including Title IX, the Clery Act, and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act. Title IX prohibits gender-based discrimination in educational programming and applies to sexual assault, intimate partner violence, stalking, hate crime, pregnancy and other discriminatory factors among students,

employees and visitors. Under Title IX, each campus must designate a coordinator and a policy that provides reasonable accommodations to the victim.

Most campuses surveyed had Title IX policies that covered sexual assault, [intimate partner](#) violence, and stalking, with about half of the policies identifying all faculty and staff as responsible for reporting incidents. More than three-quarters of Title IX coordinators notified employees about their roles in the process and more than half provided training, with most making it mandatory.

According to "Campus Response to Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence, and Stalking: A Survey of Title IX Coordinators in Texas," more than half of the coordinators had opened one to five investigations at their campuses, with nearly 20 percent handling six to 10 incidents on campus. Most respondents reported that they had initiated an investigation or opened a case involving sexual assault, whereas while less than half said they were involved with dating or domestic violence, and 37.5 percent indicated having responded to stalking incidents.

The report also discussed resources provided to victims, which included information and explanation of Title IX procedures as well as referrals to law enforcement, counseling services, student health services, medical resources for [sexual assault](#), advocacy resources, rape crisis centers or domestic violence shelters.

The report, which is shared with Texas Legislature and victim advocacy groups across the state, provides the first glance at the how the Title IX program is implemented in Texas.

The report is available from the Crime Victims' Institute at <http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org/publications/?mode=view&item=56><http://www.crimevictimsinstitute.org>

Provided by Sam Houston State University

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