



TALKING POINTS

“Considerations for School District Sexual Misconduct Policies”

The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault released guidance for school districts around creating and sustaining a specific sexual misconduct policy. The considerations specifically recommend districts address sexual violence prevention in their policy. The sexual violence prevention field can play an integral part in guiding school districts to think beyond intervention as they develop policy. Below are additional suggestions on how to include prevention in a comprehensive sexual misconduct policy for grades K-12.

- “Research has found that modifying the physical environment of schools to increase monitoring in areas perceived as unsafe can have a beneficial impact on rates of sexual harassment, other sexual violence, and dating violence among students” (Basile et al., 2016, p. 27). This approach: (a) identifies areas where sexual violence could occur within the school and (b) ensures these areas are monitored on an ongoing basis.
- Measure the school climate, “which involves a comprehensive assessment of student engagement, school safety, and the learning environment” (White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault, 2016, p. 10), on an ongoing basis—annually or biannually. The National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments (NCSSLE) maintains a [collection](#) of valid and reliable assessments of school climate appropriate for pre-K/elementary school, middle, and high schools (NCSSLE, n.d.).
- Change social norms in schools related to sexual violence and healthy relationships. Depending on the climate at your school, this could mean addressing victim-blaming, violent, or bullying behavior; promoting the strengths of women and girls; and encouraging respectful behavior. Promote a “positive, nonbiased, and emotionally compelling” (National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 2015, p. 2) message that sexual violence is preventable. Reinforce this message through posters, campaign materials, and your educational activities on sexual violence prevention and response.
- Partner with your local rape crisis center. The staff at rape crisis centers are skilled in providing community-based prevention and intervention services. Reach out to them for guidance and partnership as you create a school sexual violence prevention plan.

- Implement age-appropriate education on healthy sexuality, consent, and social and relationship boundaries for all students, including those who have intellectual or developmental disabilities and limited English proficiency. “Providing healthy and positive examples of sex and sexuality helps young people grow into sexually healthy adults. Because components of this approach focus on media images, cultural norms, and society’s image of sexual relationships, promoting healthy sexuality addresses multiple levels of the socio-ecology (CDC, 2009).” The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) publication, *Healthy Sexuality: A Guide for Advocates, Counselors and Prevention Educators*, outlines some model programs (NSVRC, 2012) and the National Sexuality Education Standards: Core Content and Skills, K-12 provides additional guidance for including these topics into the school curriculum (Future of Sex Education Initiative, 2012).
- Implement education for staff and administrators, parents, and youth-serving organizations in the community on their role in sexual violence prevention (Smith, 2016). Students should not be the only ones learning about healthy sexuality and social norms that contribute to sexual violence. “Sexual violence is a community problem that impacts everyone and, through societal norms change, can be prevented” (NSVRC, 2015, p. 4).
- Evaluate policies for effectiveness. There is no way to determine if your educational efforts to prevent sexual violence are working without evaluation. Many curricula have evaluation tools built in, or you can learn more about evaluation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, n.d.) *Evaluation* project. An evaluation plan incorporating data from each educational program, the school climate assessment, and sexual misconduct reports and outcomes can provide a comprehensive view of your efforts to prevent and respond to sexual violence.
- Support the healthy development of children. Many children in schools have already experienced sexual violence or other forms of abuse. Schools can create a trauma-informed environment (Safe Place to Learn, n.d.) to help students feel safe, begin to heal, and prevent further victimization or potential abuse behaviors.

ABOUT NSVRC

The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) is the leading nonprofit in providing information and tools to prevent and respond to sexual violence. NSVRC translates research and trends into best practices that help individuals, communities and service providers achieve real and lasting change. The center also works with the media to promote informed reporting. Every April, NSVRC leads Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM), a campaign to educate and engage the public in addressing this widespread issue. NSVRC is also one of the three founding organizations of Raliance, a national, collaborative initiative dedicated to ending sexual violence in one generation. The organization was chartered in 2000 by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape through a cooperative agreement with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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