
Governor Terry McAuliffe's Task Force on Combating Campus Sexual Violence
Chair Attorney General Mark Herring

Response Subcommittee

Submitted by: Allen W. Groves

Recommendation Summary: *Explain the legal, program and/or policy change(s) proposed.*

Virginia colleges and universities should adopt and/or support one or more smart phone applications that provide easy options for student users to report sexual assaults to police (anonymously or with identifying information) and also provide quick access to information (including contact information) for local sexual assault resource agencies and other on or off-campus support services. Apps currently on the market that perform some or all of the desired functions include: BuddyWatch; Circle of 6; Consensible; LifeLine Response; LiveSafe; RaveGuardian; Safer Mobility; SmartTek SmartGuard; TapShield; TipSoft; 911Cellular.

Need: *Explain the problem or issue addressed by this recommendation, providing background information as necessary. Describe the anticipated results / objectives that this recommendation aims to accomplish.*

Students who are victims of sexual assault may delay in reporting to police or other authorities in part due to obstacles or difficulties in identifying mechanisms (and contact points) to do so. They may also delay in seeking support services for these same reasons. A smart phone app that contains links to these reporting and support service options (as well as other critical information, such as school policies) may increase the likelihood of a student receiving timely support. An active link to the host institution's reporting portal would be beneficial, provided that appropriate confidentiality of that information passing through the provider's servers (if necessary) could be assured. These smart phone apps may also provide prevention resources, such as tracking by friends, emergency text messaging with GPS location to pre-selected friends, and similar tools.

Anticipated Challenges to Implementation of Recommendation: *Explain counter-arguments to the recommendation. What are some of the obstacles in implementing the recommendation?*

Any smart phone app(s) selected must be easy to adopt by student users and have application to a wide range of smart phones on the market. It must be offered at low or no cost to student users. Cost to the host institution must be reasonable. The app(s) must be customizable to each school, so that local resources, contacts and policies are featured. Some students may fear intrusiveness if the app is linked to local or campus police, so care must be taken to protect student privacy. There are a great many apps currently in the marketplace, and each institution must determine which app or apps fits best with the needs of that school. Some apps currently available do too little, while others are needlessly complex. The technology is changing/evolving rapidly and an app selected today may be obsolete in two years, requiring a new rollout and potential confusion to students.

Implementation: *Includes legislative needs, program ideas or needs, strategies, etc. What groups are likely to support this recommendation and why?*

It is anticipated that support will come from campus and local city/county police forces, emergency preparedness offices, and parent groups interested in student safety.

Fiscal Impact: *Does this proposal require financial or personnel resources? Will it generate revenue? Will a Budget Amendment be necessary?*

It is anticipated that each institution will incur the cost of a contract with the provider or providers of the app/apps ultimately selected. This financial cost is estimated to be less than \$50,000/year at larger institutions, and less for smaller ones. One possibility is for several institutions to pool resources and enter into a contract with one provider serving those multiple institutions at a reduced per-institution cost.