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

Response Subcommittee

Submitted by: Jean Cheek

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

Responding to reports of sexual violence requires specialized training in trauma. It is recommended that on and off-campus responders be fully trained in trauma response to best support victims, their families, and supportive friends. Victims and survivors are frequently reluctant to report their experience of sexual violence. Trauma-informed responders are equipped to respond appropriately and with sensitivity to victims who report sexual violence.

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.*

Sexual violence is underreported. Several factors contribute to low levels of reporting. These factors include: insensitive responses to disclosures of violence, concerns with confidentiality, being conflicted about their own behavior including engaging in drinking or substance abuse at the time of the assault, and not wanting to get the person who assaulted them in trouble.

Responding appropriately to reports of sexual violence requires specialized training for providing appropriate response and support to victims who make the choice to report. Victim-centered, trauma-informed training is necessary for all on and off-campus personnel to whom a victim might make a report or who might be involved in investigating or adjudicating a report of sexual violence. In addition, victims require confidential and anonymous options for reporting incidents of sexual violence.

Colleges and universities ought to coordinate training between and among on and off-campus personnel who might receive a report of sexual violence. Sharing of information will optimize the opportunity to properly support victims who chose to report.

Colleges and universities should establish a Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) to help coordinate services and develop a more unified approach when responding to sexual violence complaints.

Colleges and universities ought to engage in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with an area hospital to provide qualified personnel who can perform a Physical Evidence Recovery Kit (PERK) exam for collection of evidence for use in criminal investigations. It is preferable that the exam be performed by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) or Forensic Nurse Examiner (FNE).

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

Specialized training requires resources. Challenges include identifying appropriate trainers who can deliver training in trauma response to a variety of responders including medical and mental health professionals, law enforcement, Title IX investigators, student affairs professionals, women's center and other advocacy and support personnel.

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

Victims and victim advocates will support the implementation of trauma training for responders. Institutions will need to identify the appropriate personnel to receive the training and from whom. Training content should be reviewed by victim advocates for appropriateness.

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

Training requires resources. Institutions ought to partner with each other, the local sexual assault crisis services organization, and state agencies for coordinating training. The investment of time and financial resources is necessary to fully implement a comprehensive and thorough training program for individuals who might be involved in responding to or investigating a report of sexual violence.