

## Primary Prevention and Awareness Policy

Programs to Prevent Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking:

Mercyhurst University engages in annual comprehensive, intentional, and integrated programming, initiatives, strategies, and campaigns intended to end dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking that:

- A. Are culturally relevant, inclusive of diverse communities and identities, sustainable, responsive to community needs, and either are informed by research or are assessed for value, effectiveness, or outcome; and
- B. Consider environmental risk and protective factors as they occur on the individual, relationship, institutional, community and societal levels.

The University's educational programming consists of primary prevention and awareness programs for all incoming students and new employees and ongoing awareness and prevention campaigns for students that:

- A. Clearly communicate that the institution prohibits the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (as defined by the Clery Act);
- B. Provide the definitions of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking according to any applicable jurisdictional definitions of these terms;
- C. Define consent and describe what behaviors and actions constitute consent, in reference to sexual activity as defined by the student and employee codes of conduct;
- D. Provide a description of safe and positive options for bystander intervention. Bystander intervention means safe and positive options that may be carried out by an individual or individuals to prevent harm or intervene when there is a risk of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Bystander intervention includes recognizing situations of potential harm, understanding institutional structures and cultural conditions that facilitate violence, overcoming barriers to intervening, identifying safe and effective intervention options, and taking action to intervene;
- E. Provide information on risk reduction. Risk reduction means options designed to decrease perpetration and bystander inaction, and to increase empowerment for victims in order to promote safety and to help individuals and communities address conditions that facilitate violence;
- F. Provide an overview of information contained in the Annual Security and Fire Safety Report in compliance with the Clery Act;
- G. Provide information regarding:
  - 1. procedures victims should follow if a crime of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking occurs (as described in "Procedures

Victims Should Follow if a Crime of Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Occurs” elsewhere in this Annual Safety Report);

2. how the institution will protect the confidentiality of victims and other necessary parties;
3. existing counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, legal assistance, visa and immigration assistance, student financial aid, and other services available for victims, both in the institution and in the community;
4. options for, available assistance in, and how to request changes to academic, living, transportation, and working situations or protective measures; and
5. procedures for institutional disciplinary action in cases of alleged dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

#### Primary Prevention and Awareness Programs:

The University provides primary prevention and awareness programs to all incoming students and employees that involves the distribution of educational materials to new students, participating in and presenting information and materials during new student and employee orientations, providing programs by invitation at staff meetings or academic programs, and requiring incoming first-year students to take online courses related to sexual assault and high-risk drinking awareness and education. These trainings include:

- Clearly articulated statements that the University prohibits the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.
- The University and State definitions of consent.
- A description of safe and positive options for bystander intervention.
- Information on specific risk reduction strategies.

#### Ongoing Prevention and Awareness Campaigns:

The University provides an annual educational campaign for all students and employees designed to provide ongoing education and programming around issues of sexual violence – including sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking. Campaign strategies employed include face-to-face presentations, online training programs, printed materials, and related lectures.

Ongoing prevention and awareness campaigns include welcome week speakers; domestic violence month events and activities; sexual assault awareness month, which includes participation in an annual community “Take Back the Night” event; bystander intervention programming; programming specific to developing healthy relationships; and education seminars on the healthy relationship curriculum created in conjunction with community partners.

The following are some specific examples of annual programs currently offered by the University. This list is not all inclusive:

- Online Education

EverFi's online sexual assault prevention course is required of all freshmen students to learn effective ways to prevent and report sexual assault on our campus.

- **Orientation Programming**  
Incoming first year students participate in information sessions about healthy relationships, the sexual misconduct policy, consent, bystander intervention, and campus and community specific resources. New faculty and employees receive Clery Act and Title IX information during their orientation programs.
- **Extended Orientation Programming**  
Incoming first year students take an introduction to Mercyhurst course that addresses civility, sexual violence, bystander intervention, and other topics to introduce students to the university.
- **Step Up! Bystander Intervention Workshops**  
Step Up! Bystander Intervention Presentations help people understand what stops us from intervening in potentially harmful situations and provides tools to intervene. Bystander Intervention workshops cover bystander effect and ways to decide to act when we see someone in need. Participants leave with practical tips to intervene.
- **Healthy Relationships Curriculum** functions on a series of educational modules about relationships: with others (intimate partnerships, dating, ending relationships) and with the self (knowing boundaries, finding one's voice to set boundaries, discerning what is appropriate for the individual, etc.).

#### Risk Reduction:

With no intent to victim blame and recognizing that only abusers are responsible for their abuse, the following are some strategies to reduce one's risk of sexual assault or harassment (taken from Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network, [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org))

- Be aware of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
- Try to avoid isolated areas. It is more difficult to get help if no one is around.
- Walk with purpose. Even if you don't know where you are going, act like you do.
- Trust your instincts. If a situation or location feels unsafe or uncomfortable, it probably isn't the best place to be.
- Try not to load yourself down with packages or bags as this can make you appear more vulnerable.
- Make sure your cell phone is with you and charged and that you have cab money and/or an on-demand driver app loaded.
- Don't allow yourself to be isolated with someone you don't trust or someone you don't know.

- Avoid putting music headphones in both ears so that you can be more aware of your surroundings, especially if you are walking alone.
- When you go to a social gathering, go with a group of friends. Arrive together, check in with each other throughout the evening, and leave together. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way out of a bad situation.
- Don't leave your drink unattended while talking, dancing, using the restroom, or making a phone call. If you've left your drink alone, just get a new one.
- Don't accept drinks from people you don't know or trust. If you choose to accept a drink, go with the person to the bar to order it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself. At parties, don't drink from the punch bowls or other large, common open containers.
- Watch out for your friends, and vice versa. If a friend seems out of it, is way too intoxicated for the amount of alcohol they've had, or is acting out of character, get him or her to a safe place immediately.
- If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.). Be explicit with doctors so they can give you the correct tests (you will need a urine test and possibly others).
- If you need to get out of an uncomfortable or scary situation, here are some things that you can try:
  - Remember that being in this situation is not your fault. You did not do anything wrong, it is the person who is making you uncomfortable that is to blame.
  - Be true to yourself. Don't feel obligated to do anything you don't want to do. "I don't want to" is always a good enough reason. Do what feels right to you and what you are comfortable with.
  - Have a code word with your friends or family so that if you don't feel comfortable you can call them and communicate your discomfort without the person you are with knowing. Your friends or family can then come to get you or make up an excuse for you to leave.
  - Lie. If you don't want to hurt the person's feelings it is better to lie and make up a reason to leave than to stay and be uncomfortable, scared, or worse. Some excuses you could use are: needing to take care of a friend or family member, not feeling well, having somewhere else that you need to be, etc.
- Try to think of an escape route. How would you try to get out of the room? Where are the doors? Windows? Are there people around who might be able to help you? Is there an emergency phone nearby?
- If you and/or the other person have been drinking, you can say that you would rather wait until you both have your full judgment before doing anything you may regret later.

How to Be an Active Bystander:

Bystander intervention means safe and positive options that may be carried out by an individual or individuals to prevent harm or intervene when there is a risk of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, or stalking. Bystander intervention includes recognizing situations of potential harm, understanding institutional structures and cultural conditions that facilitate violence, overcoming barriers to intervening, identifying safe and effective intervention options, and taking action to intervene.

Bystanders play a critical role in the prevention of sexual and relationship violence. They are “individuals who observe violence or witness the conditions that perpetuate violence. They are not directly involved but have the choice to intervene, speak up, or do something about it.” We want to promote a community culture of accountability where bystanders are actively engaged in the prevention of violence without causing further harm. We may not always know what to do even if we want to help. Below is a list of some ways to be an active bystander. If you or someone else is in immediate danger, call MUPD at (814) 824-3911 or the local police by dialing 911. This could be when a person is yelling at or being physically abusive towards another and it is not safe for you to interrupt.

1. Watch out for your friends and fellow students/employees. If you see someone who looks like they could be in trouble or need help, ask if they are ok.
2. Be direct, delegate responsibility, or cause a distraction when you see another person seclude, hit on, attempt to make out with, or have sex with people who are incapacitated.
3. Intervene when someone discusses plans to take sexual advantage of another person.
4. Believe someone who discloses sexual assault, abusive behavior, or experience with stalking.
5. Refer people to on- or off-campus resources listed in the Annual Security Report for support in health, counseling, or with legal assistance.