

School Practitioner Community of Practice
(A network for sharing & exchange)
November 7, 2018

Emerging concern:

>Support for students who want to report peer sexual assault

Learning from the field

>How schools are addressing reports of peer sexual assault

Links to resources on the topic

Invitation to listserv participants to share perspectives

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

Note: Go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla> for links to other Center resources including

- >Upcoming initiatives, conferences & workshops
- >Calls for grant proposals, presentations, and papers
- >Training and job opportunities
- >Upcoming webcasts & other professional development opportunities

This resource is from the
Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports, UCLA

Given shrinking education budgets, we have been asked to increase our outreach to make our free resources more available (e.g., for planning, professional development, etc.).

So please feel free to share with anyone you think might benefit (e.g., forward our resources to individuals and share on listservs and websites).

For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

For previous postings of community of practice discussions, see
<http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/practitioner.htm>

Emerging concern:

>Support for students who want to report peer sexual assault

Excerpt from Ed Week

When Students Say #MeToo, Schools May Be Unprepared to Help

https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/rulesforengagement/2018/09/when_students_say_meteor_schools_may_be_unprepared_to_help.html

If students speak up about sexual assault, are their schools ready to help them? ...In some schools, students may face confusing obstacles as they determine where and how to share concerns about sexual misconduct by their peers.... Under Title IX, the federal law that prohibits sex discrimination in education, students can ask schools to address the fallout of a sexual assault, even if it occurred off campus.... Districts are required to have a Title IX coordinators.... Students and their families often don't know who their Title IX coordinator is, or that the role exists at all. ...

Learning from the field

>How schools are addressing reports of peer sexual assault

We shared this concern with colleagues working in schools and here is a sample of responses:

- (1) From a school psychologist: “I am glad that you asked this question. Title IX Coordinators are not clearly indexed. I found out who fills that role and sent a message to him asking for the process. I asked our high school and middle school psych's for input. Here is one response:

I don't think I've seen anything or been given a directive as to what district protocol is, if any exists. I've had one incident reported by a student last year. The accuser shared the incident occurred a year prior. Both students were interviewed by deputy and admin but it was a "he said, she said" situation with no tangible proof therefore the accuser was advised to file a police report to start and investigation if she chose to go that route. Deputy said , legally that's all that could be done at the time given the situation and time that had passed. In terms of support, we link students and families to counseling options. Psychoeducational counseling may not be enough to address such traumatic event therefore outside resources may be best.

I will send the others as they come in. If this were to arise in my purview, I would speak with the student, parents and site administration. If the abuse is active, the Deputy and/or CPS would be notified. I would provide a list of resources to the family and work with out community liaison staff for follow up. I would establish a safety plan with the student if appropriate. In all cases I would have on-going contact of some kind depending on the circumstances. I'll let you know what the Title IX Coordinator's response is....”

- (2) Also from a school psychologist: “The school buildings I supported were often given autonomy by their districts. Sometimes the principal handled it, sometimes a school counselor. Each building was pretty much on its own. I don't think I ever knew who the Title IX coordinator was, or if that person accomplished anything. What was done with a report, of course, was confidential, so I rarely knew what happened.”
- (3) From a school Principal: “We have partnerships with sexual trauma organizations that comes in and provide group lessons for prevention and instruction. Typically sexual trauma groups tend to do outreach for school-based work. We also have a student centered reporting system called that allows any student to make a report.”
- (4) From a Superintendent: “We have a school social worker and counselors who provide support in conjunction with our regional mental health center. Our school resource officers provide monitoring for safety and our principals and counselors provide schedule accommodations as needed. In some cases, we develop a 504 to provide greater assistance, but the biggest benefit is wrap around community services through the social worker and counselors.”

- (5) From a School Social Worker: “In our state sexual activity is reportable and is at times a felony depending on the age of the students; other times not.

<https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/rfksaa.pdf>

The reality is that while most staff strive to be supportive and take sexual activity and sexual assault very seriously, the support available to students in schools after the fact is generally limited to the availability of specialized instructional support personnel (of which there is a shortage). I believe this is true across the country. What I have witnessed is that there is serious and concerted effort to keep both the victim and the offender away from each other in school once known. That is not always 100% effective. Many school districts, for example, have one high school and cannot send a student to another high school for practical and capacity reasons. Additionally, it would seem that in a high school of 2000 students (as mine is) it would be relatively easy to adjust the schedules but, believe me, it isn't without trampling on the rights of one or both students. I have seen counselors struggle to make that change happen. And to have someone “follow” one or both students to ensure they don't encounter each other is quite impractical, particularly in general population situations such as the lunch room, assemblies, or hallways. Most schools don't have the capacity to do that, and for how long? All years in high school? 'Til the end of the year? I pose this with no answers that satisfy all parties. If a case goes to court, the perpetrator is frequently returned back to his/her high school and the issue remains: how to keep the victim from feeling or becoming re-victimized. And that includes from harassment by peers.

It is also my sense that even though Title IX requires a coordinator be designated, most staff/personnel have no idea who that person is in a district, and I daresay that includes most administrators. In my opinion the majority of Title IX coordinators have no training in the issue and are designated as such by virtue of their position in the district (for example, pupil services director or health services coordinator) rather than by expertise on the subject.

Lastly, even though required to conduct their own investigation under Title IX, schools are ill equipped to do so. While staff/administrators do understand students should not be subjected to harassment, bullying or assault, it is sometimes difficult to determine what actually occurred in a “he said/she said” situation. They are not trained in interviewing nor asking questions that result in good information. I personally know of more than one situation where the behavior of the girl was not allowed into testimony (in court) and her truthfulness was suspect. In one case the young man ended up in jail for a year while the girl continued to go her own way. From what I know of that situation, it was mutual consent . . . until the girl's father heard of it. Title IX is an old law and a necessary one. It could be a better, stronger one. However, it does need to give schools additional tools to enforce it. This includes strong training provided to several persons in each district, better communication to staff regarding what to look for, better communication with the community, improved communication between school and police, and a clear plan/policy that is available to the public/parents in each school district that includes whom to contact when harassment and assault is suspected.”

- (6) From a School Counselor and formerly at State Department of Education: “Sadly, I'm afraid many schools may not be adequately prepared if their policy is limited to Title IX Coordinator efforts. First of all, students typically don't talk about these types of issues with people they don't know. They may, however, confide in a teacher or friend so schools need to be prepared with some type of process to meet student needs. I'm excerpting from a document that resulted from an effort I spearheaded in 2006. Preventing child and youth sexual harassment, abuse and assault <http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/Parents/files/PREVENTdocument.pdf>

This was developed in response to a legislated directive for schools to provide age appropriate information on sexual assault, abuse and harassment for grades K - 12 and their families. While some information is dated, I think schools might do well to think about the guidance provided parents in this document so they can prepare themselves for reports by both students and their families. In addition to being prepared to respond to reports, I also believe that

schools need to take the preventative step of presenting age appropriate information to students, along with recommended procedures for students to follow if they have been a victim of assault, harassment or abuse.

The resources listed in this document were the best available at the time, but given the #metoo movement, I'm sure there are much better things out there now. My suggestion to schools is to collaborate with local agency experts who understand and work with victims to ensure they have appropriate and best possible information to share with staff, students and their families.”

Examples of guidance for families taken from that document:

Prevention Tips for Families: (I've generalized the suggestions to fit all age groups and potential situations.)

- >Model appropriate behavior. For example, use language that avoids stereotyping individuals by gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, or other personal characteristics.
- >Set clear expectations for behavior toward others and talk about what to do when others are harassing or being harassed and/or assaulted. Share your messages and values. (My addition: Discuss your views and values regarding current events and how you hope your child will respond should anything happen to them or one of their friends.)
- >Talk about healthy boy/girl relationships and the fact that a great deal of sexual harassment occurs in past, current or perceived dating relationships.
- >Request a copy of your school's harassment/assault policy. Read it, discuss it with your child/youth, and keep it on hand as a reference. If any part is unclear to you, make an appointment with an administrator and ask questions.
- >Ask your school to put sexual harassment/assault on the agenda for parent-teacher organization meetings or parent discussion topic lists.

What to do if harassment/assault happens to your child or youth:

- Listen to what your child or youth tells you with an open mind — don't be too quick to judge them.
- Don't ignore the issue; it usually doesn't go away by itself, and may get worse if no action is taken.
- Report it to school administration or someone in charge of the child's/youth's activity. Ask that the school/organization keep you informed of the actions taken, as well as future plans, to ensure that this problem doesn't occur again.
- Encourage your child or youth to tell the harasser in person or in writing: 1) the specific actions or words that make them uncomfortable; 2) that the behavior is not welcome; and 3) that the behavior must stop.
- Keep a written record of the incidents of harassment. This will be important if an investigation becomes necessary. Make notes of any witnesses who might have observed the incident(s).
- Support your child or youth while at school, or other activities, by making sure that another adult knows about the harassment such as a teacher, counselor, or other staff person.
- If the institution does not take prompt action to stop and resolve the harassment after you have reported it to them, file a complaint with an outside agency such as your state's Civil Rights Commission.
- If your child or youth reports harassment of a friend, direct and support their efforts to get help for this friend.
- If your child or youth has been found to be a perpetrator of sexual harassment, talk with him/her about your expectations for his/her behavior in clear and certain terms. Reinforce your expectations with clear consequences for his/her actions and follow-up to ensure that the behavior has stopped.

Links to resources on the topic

Resources from our Center

- > *Preventing Teen Dating Violence* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/dating.pdf>
- > *Sexual Harassment by Peers in Schools* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/harass.pdf>

Resources from others

- > *How to Protect Students from Sexual Harassment: A Primer for Schools* – <https://www.nwlc.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/Final%20SH%20Fact%20Sheet-Schools.pdf>
- > *Sexual Violence Prevention Strategies* – <https://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/sexualviolence/prevention.html>
- > *Sexual Harassment: It's Not Academic* – <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/ocrshpam.html>
- > *Sexual Harassment Prevention in Schools* – <http://www.ccasa.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/Sexual-Harassment-Prevention-in-Schools-Curriculum-Manual.pdf>
- > *Love Doesn't Have to Hurt* – <https://www.apa.org/pi/families/resources/love-teens.pdf>
- > *Love is Respect* – <https://www.loveisrespect.org/>
- > *US Dept of Ed Sexual Harassment Guidance* – <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/sexhar00.html>
- > *About Sexual Violence* – <http://www.pcar.org/about-sexual-violence/teens>
- > *Preventing and Responding to Teen Dating Violence* – <https://vawnet.org/sc/preventing-and-responding-teen-dating-violence>
- > *School Policy on Dating Violence* – http://www.violencepreventionworks.org/public/school_policy_kit.page
- > *Teen Dating Violence* – https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/teen_dating_violence.html
- > *District Sexual Harassment Policy* – <https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/383/BUL-3349.1-Sexual%20Harassment%20Policy.pdf>
- > *Title IX Litigation and Enforcement for K12 Sexual Assault Survivors* – <https://www.publicjustice.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Title-IX-and-K-12-Sexual-Assault.pdf>
- > *Considerations for School District Sexual Misconduct Policies* – <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/file/900716/download>

Invitation to listserv participants to share perspectives

How are are your local schools supporting students who report peer sexual assault?

Let us hear whatever you want to share about the above or other related matters!!

Send your responses to Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Links to a few other relevant resources & other topics of concern

- > *Let's take a stand against sexual harassment in schools* –
http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/oct18/vol76/num02/Let's-Take-a-Stand-Against-Sexual-Harassment-in-Schools.aspx?utm_source=marketing&utm_medium=email&utm_content=el&utm_campaign=el-newissue-oct18-email-100518
- > *Preventing child and youth sexual harassment, abuse and assault* –
<http://www.icyd.iowa.gov/Parents/files/PREVENTdocument.pdf>
- > *Unexamined assumptions and unintended consequences of routine screening for depression*
[https://www.jpsychores.com/article/S0022-3999\(17\)31068-1/pdf](https://www.jpsychores.com/article/S0022-3999(17)31068-1/pdf)
- > *Depression Screening and Health Outcomes in Children and Adolescents: A Systematic Review*
<http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0706743717727243>
- > *The State of Mental Health in America* --
<https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/state-mental-health-america>
- > *Associations between screen time and lower psychological well-being among children and adolescents: Evidence from a population-based study* –
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2211335518301827>
- > *Measuring School Climate Using the 2015 School Crime Supplement: Technical Report* –
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2018098>
- > *Creating Policies to Support Healthy Schools: Policymaker, Educator, and Student Perspectives*
<https://www.childtrends.org/publications/creating-policies-to-support-healthy-schools-policymaker-educator-and-student-perspectives>
- > *Attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, multimodal treatment, and longitudinal outcome: evidence, paradox, and challenge* – <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1002/wcs.1324>
- > *Recent books from our Center:*
 - >> *Improving school improvement*
 - >> *Addressing barriers to learning: In the classroom and schoolwide*
(To ensure free and immediate access, these two books can be downloaded from our Center's website can be readily accessed at:
http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html
 - >> a third book – *Transforming student and learning supports: Developing a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system* – has been published by Cognella
<https://titles.cognella.com/transforming-student-and-learning-supports-9781516512782.html>



For information about the

National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports

go to <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to enabling equity of opportunity, promoting whole child development, and enhancing school climate.

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

**We post a broad range of issues and responses to the *Net Exchange*
on our website at <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm>
and on *Facebook* (access from the Center's home page <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)**