

2023 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

University of Minnesota

The Prevention Advocates program at the University of Minnesota: Preventing sexual assault in a high-risk community

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

1. Audience-specific anti-sexual harassment education
2. Ally or Ambassador Programs
3. Bystander Intervention Programs
4. Prevention Program or Toolkit

Description of Work:

The University of Minnesota developed the President's Initiative to Prevent Sexual Misconduct (PIPSM) in 2017. PIPSM involved many committees, including the Student Education and Engagement Committee (SEEC), which was charged with developing, implementing, and evaluating strategies for a coordinated campus-wide sexual misconduct prevention plan for students. At such a large institution, the SEEC understood the importance of developing, implementing and evaluating tailored prevention programs and strategies for specific high-risk communities. One such high-risk community is our University's fraternity and sorority community, where campus-specific data from the 2019 Association of American Universities Campus Climate Survey indicates that 41.5% of undergraduate women in sororities experienced some form of sexual assault during their time as a student at the U of M, compared to 25.8% of undergraduate women who are not a member of a sorority. Fraternity undergraduate men are also at higher risk with 14% having experienced sexual assault during their time as a student, compared to 6% of undergraduate men who are not in a fraternity.

Given the high risk in this community, the Health Promotion team at Boynton Health completed an assessment to help identify community-specific risks for sexual assault, and tailored prevention strategies. Based on conversations with community members and previous research, the assessment focused on risks for sexual assault within the context of a hookup. Through qualitative interviews, we learned about students' consent behavior, the role of alcohol in hookups, peer influences and fraternity/sorority events that may be higher risk for sexual assault.

Based on the results of the assessment, Boynton Health developed the Prevention Advocates program, which equips fraternity and sorority members to lead sexual assault prevention efforts within their chapters and community. The goals of the Prevention Advocates program are to:

- Increase the use of affirmative verbal consent;
- Increase bystander intervention behavior;

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- Decrease peer pressure to engage in sexual activity; and
- Decrease level of intoxication during sexual encounters.

Prevention Advocates serve for one year and are trained to facilitate prevention workshops within their chapter. In the second year of the program (2022-23), we engaged Prevention Advocates from 16 different fraternity/sorority chapters. They facilitated 25 workshops reaching 976 students within fraternities and sororities with important information about consent, bystander intervention, and supporting peers who experience sexual assault. This approach of peers providing education within their chapters is important because they are not only educating peers, they are also setting norms and expectations within their chapter for the culture of the group, and that will likely have more influence on changing behavior than education alone.

Beyond facilitating prevention workshops, Prevention Advocates also identify and work to change practices and policies within their community that increase risk for sexual assault. Our goal is that these changes reduce rates of sexual assault long after these students graduate. One example of a change in practice within the community that began as a result of the work of Prevention Advocates is Boynton Health's Sober Monitor Training Program. In the Fall of 2021, Prevention Advocates identified a need for formal, uniform training of sober monitors across chapters. Many chapters had members serving at events as sober monitors who received no training and were not equipped to identify concerning situations nor effectively intervene.

Recognizing this as an opportunity to better equip students to intervene in high-risk situations, the Health Promotion team at Boynton Health brought together University stakeholders to develop a sober monitor training. After much consultation, in the Fall of 2022 Boynton Health piloted a two-part sober monitor training program for fraternity and sorority students who serve as sober monitors. Part one is a canvas course that students complete asynchronously prior to serving as a sober monitor. Part two is an in-person training delivered by a trained student leader of the chapter to the group of sober monitors one to two days prior to an event. To evaluate the training, we conducted a pre- and post-training survey of students who completed the training to assess their knowledge and confidence for intervening. Of the 252 students enrolled in the training, 205 completed the pre-training survey and 32 completed the post-training survey, which was given at the end of the semester. Survey results indicate a significant improvement in both recognizing situations where intervention is necessary and increased confidence to intervene.

What impact did the course have on knowledge?

Student was able to correctly identify...	Pre-Survey (n=205)	Post-Survey (n=32)
the signs of alcohol overdose	37%	69%
risky alcohol behaviors	61%	88%
intervention strategies	71%	91%

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aspects of the University's policy on affirmative consent	89%	97%
aspects of the University's policy on affirmative consent related to coercion	95%	100%
The Aurora Center as the campus resource that provides free and confidential services to victim/survivors	92%	97%

What impact did the course have on students' confidence?

Students who indicated they were 'quite a bit confident' or 'extremely confident' in...	Pre-Survey (n=204)	Post-Survey (n=32)
Recognizing the signs of alcohol overdose	67%	97%
Responding in an alcohol overdose situation	48%	84%
Naming key elements of sexual consent	83%	94%
Recognizing potential red flags for sexual assault	77%	94%
Recognizing the signs of incapacitation, at which point one cannot consent to sexual activity	87%	97%
Intervening in a potential sexual assault situation	66%	81%
Supporting someone who has experienced sexual assault	66%	81%

In the post-training survey, we also assessed whether or not sober monitors who completed the training intervened if they encountered any situations. Of the 25 students who served as a sober monitor at least once during the semester, two students encountered potential alcohol overdose situations and three encountered a potential sexual assault. In all five incidents, the sober monitor intervened.

Boynton Health will continue to provide the sober monitor training to fraternity and sorority chapters, and continue the Prevention Advocate program in order to continue to identify effective prevention strategies within this high-risk community.

Website for further information (if applicable): NA

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