

Sexual Assault on the Campus

The Facts

- Most sexual violence occurs among people between the ages of 18-24.
- One quarter of women in college today have been the victims of rape or attempted rape, and almost 90% of them knew their assailants.
- One of 13 male students said they had forced sex upon a woman; 100% knew the victim.



Rape

Rape is forced physical intercourse that is unwanted. On the college campus, most rapes are perpetrated by someone the victim knew.

Force can be physical, verbal (this includes coercion, threats, guilt trips) or implied. The victim doesn't have to resist for the forced sexual activity to be considered rape.

Victims can be and are sexually assaulted by friends, dates, classmates, neighbors, co-workers, etc. Research has consistently revealed that most rape victims knew their assailants.

So much silence surrounds this type of assault. In some cases, the victim is unaware that what happened is a crime and/or has difficulty describing what happened. Victims may encounter disbelief from friends, family and professionals. Victims may also feel guilty or responsible for the assault, thinking that they should have done something differently.

Risk Factors

Alcohol Use

In cases of sexual violence on the UWSP campus, either one or both people involved had been drinking. Alcohol impairs judgment as well as physical capabilities. Intoxicated perpetrators will be less inclined to heed a victims' wishes to stop. Likewise, victims may become physically incapable of defending themselves. Intoxication is not an excuse for perpetrating rape.

Rape Myth Stereotypes

Be aware of stereotypes that promote violence against women, such as "If you think she's been teasing and leading you on, she's asking for it," "It is manly to use force." Such stereotypes are supportive of rape myth.

Be aware of stereotypes that discourage women from self-expression, such as "Anger is unfeminine," "Being passive and submissive is feminine." Such stereotypes are also supportive of rape myth.

Ignoring Instincts

Men and women have the right to set sexual limits. If you feel you are being pressured past your limit, you probably are. Carefully honor your instincts and remove yourself from the situation. Convincing yourself that everything is fine and that you shouldn't worry is not a good strategy.

Suggestions for Students

- Avoid, or limit, alcohol use. Alcohol and drugs decrease inhibitions and lead to behavior that is less rational and more impulsive. You are committing sexual assault if you have sex with a person who is drunk, under the influence of drugs or unconscious. The person is unable to give consent or resist sexual advances.
- Recognize and deal wisely with peer pressure. Very few college students are perpetrators of rape, yet a larger number of college students either facilitate opportunities for rape or do nothing to intervene even when it is believed that a rape is eminent. Step in when you believe that something is wrong.
- Healthy relationships are anchored in respect. Both men and women have the same rights to initiate contact and to set limits. Do your best to engage in and model healthy relationships.
- Take advantage of campus resources which provide education and support.



Avoid Perpetrating Assault

- Adopt a healthy, respectful philosophy. Actively seek consent from a partner, rather than “doing whatever you want until someone tells you not to.”
- It’s sexual assault if you have sex with someone without their consent, even if you have had sex with the person previously.
- Previous sexual experience, flirting, attractive or revealing clothing do not guarantee a sexual encounter. Sex without consent is still rape. Rape is a crime.
- Psychological pressure is a form of coercion. Telling a date “everybody is doing it,” or “I thought you loved me,” or “I’m going to tell our friends that we did it any way,” is emotional blackmail.
- Spending money on a woman does not “entitle” a man to sex.



Avoid Victimization

- Think twice about going to someone’s room or apartment. Most date rapes occur in private, not public, places.
- Be careful about inviting anyone into your room or apartment. Some may interpret your invitation as a prelude to sex.
- Be assertive. Perpetrators interpret passivity as permission. It is okay to be direct and firm with someone who is sexually pressuring you, even if it hurts feelings. Do not ignore behavior that makes you uncomfortable—it is not likely to stop without your intervention.
- Heavy petting or removing clothing may be interpreted by your date that you want to have sex. Be clear about what you and what your date wants to do before the situation gets too difficult for you and your partner to control.

Regardless of choices made or not made by a victim, rape is never the victims’ fault. Rape is a crime for which the perpetrator assumes all responsibility.

In Case of Sexual Assault. . .

1. Get to a safe place.
2. Confide in someone you trust, even if you are unsure how to describe what happened. A roommate, friend, hall director or CA, Health or Counseling Center personnel can provide emotional support and help identify courses of action. It’s very difficult to think after a traumatic experience, so get support.
3. Do not shower, bathe, douche, or change clothes. Cleaning will destroy important evidence of the incident.
4. Seek medical attention immediately. Have a rape examination for the collection of evidence regardless of your immediate interest in pursuing legal action. St. Michael’s hospital offers rape examinations. Medical attention following rape can help you address sexually transmitted diseases and/or pregnancy.
5. If you do not go the police immediately, write down all the details of the assault and save them in case you decide to report the assault later. Reporting the assault does not mean you press charges against the offender—only the state can press charges.
6. Rape is a complex and painful experience requiring a combination of legal, medical, psychological, religious, family, and personal responses. It will disrupt a person’s life in many ways. Support groups and personal counseling have proven to be very helpful and can contribute to a healthy recovery. There is no need for you to go through the trauma of rape alone.

Resources

Campus:

Counseling Center, 715-346-3511
Rights and Responsibilities, 715-346-2611
Student Health Promotion Office, 715-346-4313
Student Health Services, 715-346-4646
UWSP Protective Services, 715-346-3456

Community:

Local emergency number, 911
St. Michael’s Hospital Emergency Room,
715-346-5100
Sexual Assault Victims Services, 715-343-7114

