

SEXUAL ASSAULT ABROAD

Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Information for Study Abroad Students (UWEC Counseling Services)

Sexual Violence Prevention

Since you will be away from home and in a new country, it is important to be more careful than you would be in a familiar environment.

Sexual violence includes acts of hands-off (e.g. verbal harassment, stalking) and hands-on violence (e.g. unwanted touching, rape). Sexual assault does not mean that the victim was “asking for it.” It is 100% the perpetrator’s fault; victims/survivors are not to blame.

Anyone can be a victim of sexual assault. Here are some general safety tips to reduce the risk of sexual violence victimization:

- When you are out of familiar contexts, inhibitions tend to be lower and warning signs may be ignored. Pay attention to the environment and to possible warnings. Be familiar with local areas and establishments that are considered unsafe.
- Even though you are a guest in someone else’s country and you want to be polite, you do not have to accept unwelcome attention. If you are worried about hurting someone’s feelings, remember that person is ignoring hours.
- Don’t take a ride from or walk home with someone you have just met - no matter how pleasant he/she may be.
- Walk to events, parties, clubs, restaurants, etc. in groups and stick together.

- The use of alcohol or drugs is often related to incidents of rape. Use alcohol responsibly and be cautious when in situations where others are abusing alcohol or drugs. If you do drink:

1. Limit alcohol consumption so you are better able to assess your surroundings
2. Do not leave beverages unattended
3. Do not take beverages, including alcohol, from someone you do not know well and trust
4. At a club/bar only accept drinks from the bartender or server
5. Go out with friends; everyone watches out for each other

- Know the “red flags” of perpetrators: (The presence of these warning signs does not mean someone will definitely commit a sexual assault. The absence of warning signs does not mean a person is definitely safe from sexual assault.)
 1. Pressures you to drink or use other substances
 2. Crosses your boundaries (e.g. sits too close, touches you, asks you inappropriate questions)
 3. Isolates you
 4. Doesn’t listen to or respect your opinions
 5. Has strong gender role stereotypes/views others as objects
 6. Is intoxicated

Cultural Mores

Cultural mores (norms/values) vary from country to country (e.g., style of dress, eye contact). Be aware of how the verbal and nonverbal signals you send with your posture, clothes, tone of voice, eye contact, or gestures may be interpreted in the context of your host country. Remember that the goal is to blend in and not look like a tourist for many reasons (e.g., target of theft, political harassment, sexual assault, etc.).

Acquaintance Rape

Acquaintance rape is more common among college students than stranger rape. In most cases, victims of sexual assault know and trust the person who assaults them. The overwhelming majority of sexual assaults are committed by men to female victims. Research suggests that 10 percent of acquaintance rape victims are men. College men who are raped are usually raped by other men.

Assertive Communication Strategies for Sexual Violence Prevention

Don't be a perpetrator:

- Remember that it is never okay to force yourself on someone, even if you have previously had sexual relations. "No" means "No!"
- Never assume that you know what another person wants. Ask and get verbal consent.
- If you have any doubts or feel you are getting mixed messages you should stop, ask and clarify. If your partner does not give you a positive "yes", you do not have consent.
- Consent is a process, not a onetime event. Check in with your partner to

make sure you have consent at every step of the way.

- A person has the right to withdraw consent at any time. If someone withdraws their consent, their partner is responsible for stopping.
- Nagging, pressuring, bribing, or coercing a partner to have sex is not respectful. A healthy sexual encounter involves equality. A partner should not feel bullied or forced into sex.
- Discuss expectations. Regardless of whether or not you have just met, are on a first date, or have been dating for years, talk about what you expect from your sexual encounter. For example, your definition of "just fooling around" may differ from your partner's.
- Remember that if your partner is intoxicated (either with alcohol or drugs), they may be unable to give consent. Act in a manner that keeps both you and your partner safe. In the state of Wisconsin, alcohol is legally considered a date rape drug.
- Listen to your partner. Listen to both their words and their non-verbal actions. If your partner respects you and your safety, he or she will listen and acknowledge any concerns.

Don't be a victim

- Know your limits and boundaries. You have the right to set limits at any time regardless of whether the person is an acquaintance, a date, a or a lover.
- Communicate your limits clearly. If you say "NO" and it is ignored, try firmly saying, "I want you to stop right now."

You can also label the act, “This is rape. This is sexual assault.”

- You do not have to be nice, protect another person’s feelings, or worry that they will not like you if you feel uncomfortable with what is going on. Your safety should be your top priority. Speak up, be clear, and be blunt.
- Acknowledge any embarrassment; it is likely your partner may feel the same way. For example, “I know this might be awkward, but I want to let you know that I am only okay with kissing right now.”
- Do not make fun of your partner or put them down for getting your consent. They are being respectful and caring.
- Anyone can be a victim of rape or other crime. Remember that the rapist is always to blame for the rape and sexual assault is NEVER the fault of the victim. No one deserves or wants to be raped.

If You Perpetrate Sexual Violence While Traveling Abroad:

- Understand sexual violence is a crime and that coercing, pushing, or forcing sexual intimacy is wrong.
- Perpetrators may face both legal and academic consequences that will have long reaching effects.

The UWEC Center for Awareness of Sexual Assault (CASA) states, “Whether someone has been drinking, flirting, or kissing someone, it doesn't mean consent to have sex with them. In Wisconsin, alcohol is legally considered a date rape drug. The more alcohol present in any situation, the less likely that legal consent is possible.”

Active Bystanders

Often sexual violence is averted from the intervention of an active bystander:

Say something **before** someone is harmed.

When do I intervene?

When the perpetrator exhibits age-inappropriate or non-mutual behavior, harassment behaviors, and sexually abusive & violent behaviors.

Five Steps Toward Taking Action:

1. Notice the event along a continuum of actions.
2. Consider whether the situation demands your action.
3. Decide if you have a responsibility to act.
4. Choose what form of assistance to use.
5. Understand how to implement the choice safely.

Victim Options to Forced Sexual Assault:

Should you surrender or fight back? There's no clear answer. However, almost all experts agree that surrendering is probably the worst choice in most cases. A victim can only rely on their intuition to choose one of the five Victim's Options:

1. Posturing: presenting yourself as a tough target (predators prefer easy prey). If that doesn't work:
2. Fleeing, the most obvious choice, might not be possible. If not:
3. Outsmarting: by verbally defusing a confrontation and maneuvering toward escape. If that doesn't work:

4. Surrendering** and hoping for the best; or preferably as a prelude to an escape, perhaps aided by:
5. Fighting like a mad dog to enable your escape. Stun & run.

**Surrendering does not equal consent to be assaulted! It is okay for victims to react in whatever way they believe keeps them safe.

Other tips:

- Look for an escape route. Distracting the perpetrator/rapist may make escape more likely. Are there other people around? Can you get their attention?
- Act quickly if you can. The longer you are in the situation, the fewer options you have. Stay calm and think. Figure out your options and how safe it is for you to resist.
- Is the rapist armed? If not, you may have more options for resisting including fighting back physically, running away, telling the rapist you have to use the bathroom and then leaving, using intimidation (telling the rapist your male roommate is on his way home), trying to talk the rapist out of it, and trying to get the rapist to see you as an individual person (e.g. “You’re hurting me!”). You could try to talk the perpetrator out of it or try to passively resist the perpetrator (throw up).
- Say “no” strongly. Say, “Stop it. This is rape.” This may shock the rapist into stopping.

If You Are Sexually Assaulted While Traveling Abroad.

- If you are in a situation where you have been sexually assaulted, it is important

for you to know what options you have to recover. You are not to blame. The perpetrator is to blame.

- We recommend you contact the international coordinator/office at your host site. This person will be able to help you connect to sexual assault response services abroad. On-site staff will only tell the “need to know” information to UWEC staff and sexual assault response services providers/sexual assault advocates.
- Sexual assault victim/survivor crisis services may vary from country to country. Getting connected with sexual assault victim/survivor advocates may be able to offer you vital information about receiving medical, and/or legal, and/or emotional support. You have the right to choose the support that fits your individual needs.
- Sexual assault advocates may be able to tell you of your legal rights, including the advantages and disadvantages of reporting the crime. The respective country’s local laws apply.
- You have the right to contact the United States Embassy or Consulate regarding sexual violence victimization.
- Whether or not you decide to press charges against the perpetrator, it is recommended that you report any incidents of sexual assault to the on-site supervisor.
- Reporting a sexual assault does not commit you to filing charges. It may help increase the awareness of other students and possibly prevent the attacker from victimizing others. Again, it is completely your individual choice.

- Hotline sexual assault victim/survivor advocacy sources may be available-check with local listings.
- It is important to consider medical attention for possible injuries or STD's. In addition, if a victim wishes to report the crime to law enforcement, a forensic examination may be needed to collect evidence. It may be beneficial to seek some immediate crisis counseling to help you deal with the trauma and to receive support.
- If you're not sure what to do, it is okay to call a trusted friend or family member, even if it is the middle of the night.
- If a victim of sexual assault wants to return home, in case by case circumstances the Study Abroad staff will work to facilitate the student returning home.

How to Support a Victim/Survivor:

- Listen, believe, & affirm that it is not the victim's fault. 92-98% of sexual assault reports are true.
- Educate yourself about rape myths.
- Get your own support (e.g. Counseling Services, CASA).
- Encourage her/him to seek support, information, and survivor options (call a hotline, go to a hospital or health center, and/or call the police), but respect her/his choice of solution to the sexual assault. It is important that the survivor makes their own decisions.
- Don't take their anger or other feelings personally.
- Don't tell them they are "Lucky it wasn't worse"-traumatized people are not consoled by such statements.

Follow Up Resources Options for Victim/Survivors When Returning Home

- CASA (Center for Awareness of Sexual Assault) 715-836-4357 (24-hour hotline)
- Counseling Services 715-836-5521
- Student Health Service 715-836-5360
- Campus Police/ECPD 715-836-2222/715-577-9045 (after hours)
- Dean of Students 715-836-5626
- S.A.N.E. (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) at Eau Claire, Sacred Heart ER 715-839-4222
- WCASA (Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault) 608-257-1516

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact UWEC Dean of Students (715-836-5626), UWEC Counseling Services (715-836-5521), or the Center for International Education (715-836-4411). Most staff in these office have also participated in the Safe Space Training Program, created to reduce homophobia/transphobia and heterosexism on the UWEC campus. The hope is that through education, advocacy, and awareness, the Safe Space Training Program will provide a campus climate that is open, safe, and accepting to all LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer/questioning) people and allies.