

SERIES ON



September 2014

Crime Victims' Institute
College of Criminal Justice • Sam Houston State University



Stalking on College Campuses: Perceptions & Approaches of Campus Law Enforcement Officers

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Research has indicated 18-20% of female college students experience stalking victimization while enrolled at their current institution.^{1,2} It is believed that female college students experience stalking more frequently than the general population.³ While male college students experience stalking victimization, less is known about prevalence within this specific population. Female students most frequently reported being stalked by an acquaintance, classmate, boyfriend/ex-boyfriend, or friend.⁴

Victims of stalking often do not report their experiences to police. One study found that less than 20% of college victims reported the experience to the police. Of those few who did report, the majority (57.6%) reported to local police, while 30.3% to university police.⁵ When victims were asked the reasons they did not seek help from police, the most common responses were "I believed the situation was too minor" (64.9%), "I was afraid the person doing these things to me would seek revenge" (40.5%), "it was a private/personal matter" (29.7%), and "I thought the police wouldn't believe me" (18.9%).⁶ When the perpetrator was an intimate partner, victims were nearly 84% less likely to report to the police.⁷

There has been little research addressing the role of law enforcement in stalking cases, and no studies specifically address the response of campus law enforcement to stalking on college

In 2006, Rachel Pendray, a 20-year old Sam Houston State University student, was shot to death by a fellow student. After dating briefly in the summer, Pendray ended her relationship with Jake Taylor, but Taylor did not want it to end. He continued to call and text her, bring her gifts, and attempted suicide twice. Pendray's friends and roommates were concerned about his obsessive attention, but police were never contacted. In December, Taylor appeared at Pendray's apartment, shooting her multiple times before killing himself.

http://www.shsu.edu/~pin_www/T@S/2012/stalkinglecture.html

and university campuses. During this past year, institutions of higher education have seen additional pressure to reconsider how they handle incidents of gender-based violence, along with new federal requirements pertaining to stalking and other types of victimization.

Campus police departments are an integral part of a college or university's response to stalking, as they may be the first and only point of contact for a victim. In order to add to the understanding of campus law enforcements' role in stalking cases, this report presents results from a survey about officer perceptions of and approaches to stalking among campus law enforcement officers in Texas.

Sample

Campus law enforcement officers from colleges and universities in Texas (N=56) were surveyed for this study. Respondents ranged in age from 31 to 66 years old, with an average age of 52. The majority of respondents were male (87.5%). Nearly three-fourths of the respondents were Caucasian (71.4%), 26.8% were Hispanic, and 1.8% were African American.

The majority of officers surveyed (67.9%) noted that they had gained previous experience in off-campus law enforcement prior to their current position on-campus. Almost all respondents (96.4%) had over 5 years of total experience in law enforcement. Also, the majority of officers (60.7%) had more than

5 years of experience specifically in campus law enforcement, and another 20% had three to five years in campus law enforcement. The majority of respondents (55.4%) were in the position of Chief of Police in their department, and 14.3% were the Assistant Chief (see Table 1).

Age (mean)	51.65 (31 - 66)
Gender	
Male	87.5%
Female	12.5%
Race/Ethnicity	
Caucasian	71.4%
Hispanic	26.8%
African-American	1.8%
Previous Experience Off-Campus	
Yes	67.9%
No	32.1%
Length of Time in Law Enforcement	
1 - 2 years	1.8%
3 - 5 years	1.8%
More than 5 years	96.4%
Length of Time in Campus Law Enforcement Position	
Less than 1 year	8.9%
1 - 2 years	10.7%
3 - 5 years	19.6%
More than 5 years	60.7%
Current Position	
Chief	55.4%
Assistant Chief	14.3%
Investigator	5.4%
Patrol Officer	3.6%
Dispatcher	1.8%
Other	19.6%

Over three-quarters of the officers surveyed (76.8%) noted that they had responded to at least one stalking case while employed in their current position. Most officers (53.6%) had responded to between 1 and 5 stalking cases, while another 23.2% had responded to more than 5 stalking cases during their time as a campus police officer.

Campus Characteristics

Table 2 presents information about the respondents' campus and their experience with stalking cases. About 40% of respondents worked at a 4-year public college or university. Nearly one-quarter of respondents (23.2%) worked at a 4-year private college or university, and 26.8% worked at a community or junior college. The number of students enrolled at these institutions varied, from campuses with fewer than 5,000 students (33.9%) to colleges/universities with more than 20,000 students (23.2%).

Respondents were also asked to estimate how often they believed stalking occurred on their campus. The majority of officers estimated one or two cases per semester (44.6%) or less than one per semester (37.5%). Only 8.9% of officers did not believe that there had ever been a stalking case reported on their campus. Officers were also asked how many protective

order violations they had responded to on behalf of stalking victims. The majority of respondents (51.8%) had not responded to a protective order violation, and 41.1% had responded to between one and four.

Type of College/University Campus	
4-year Public College/University	41.1%
4-year Private College/University	23.2%
Community/Junior College	26.8%
Engineering/Technical College	1.8%
Other	7.1%
Number of Students on Campus	
Less than 5,000 students	33.9%
5,001 to 10,000 students	26.8%
10,001 to 20,000 students	16.1%
More than 20,000 students	23.2%
Estimated Frequency of Reported Stalking Cases on Campus	
None ever reported	8.9%
Less than once per semester	37.5%
Once or twice per semester	44.6%
Once a month	5.4%
Once or twice a month	3.6%
Number of protective order violations responded to in stalking cases	
None	51.8%
1-5	41.1%
6-10	5.4%
11-20	0%
21+	1.8%
Stalking Cases Resulted in Prosecution	
Yes	32.1%
No	57.1%
Don't Know	10.7%

Close to one-third of respondents (32.1%) noted that they were aware of at least one stalking case investigated by their department in which the District Attorney's office pressed charges against the suspect, but the majority (57.1%) were not aware of a case that had resulted in prosecution.

Specialized Training

There are a variety of specialized trainings related to stalking available to law enforcement officers. The majority of respondents in this study reported they had received some type of specialized training related to stalking (98.2%). The survey specifically asked participants about training in 15 different topics related to stalking, and the average number of areas of training respondents had received was 7.7.

Figure 1 illustrates specific training related to stalking reported by campus law enforcement officers in this study. Most respondents had received training on legal responses to stalking and federal acts which apply to stalking cases on college campuses, including the Clery Act (83.9%), Title IX (71.4%), protective orders in Texas (71.4%), Texas stalking statutes (67.9%), and the Campus SaVE Act (50%). Far fewer, however, had received training on stalking protective orders in Texas (23.2%).

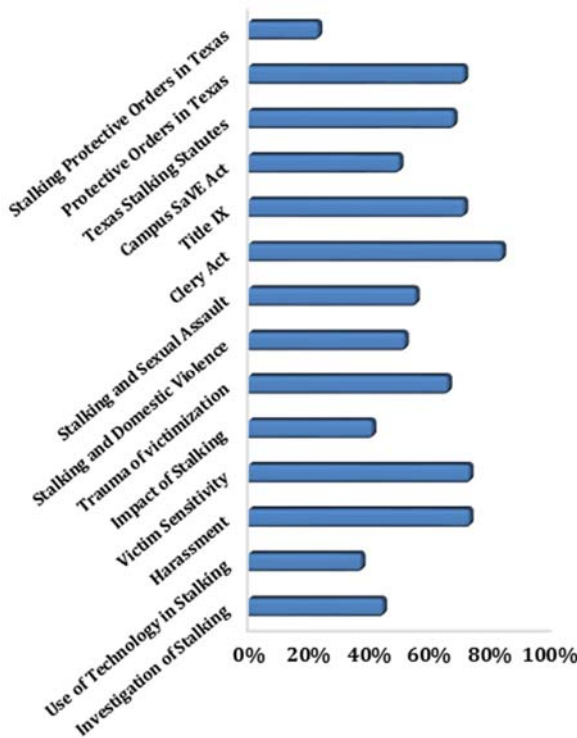


Figure 1. Types of Specialized Training Received

A majority of respondents had also received training on factors related to stalking, including the trauma of victimization (66.1%), harassment (73.2%), and victim sensitivity (73.2%). Less than half had received training on the impact of stalking (41.1%). Additionally, more than half of respondents had been trained on the overlap of stalking and sexual assault (55.4%) and stalking and domestic violence (51.8%), and somewhat less than half had been trained on investigating stalking (44.6%) or the use of technology in stalking (37.5%).

Respondents were also asked about their perceptions of the training they had received on stalking. The majority of respondents did not feel that their training had prepared them to respond to stalking cases. Only 7.3% “strongly agreed” and 32.1% “agreed” that they had been sufficiently trained to respond to stalking cases, while 33.9% “neither agreed nor disagreed,” 19.6% “disagreed,” and 5.4% “strongly disagreed.”

Understanding of Title IX, Clery Act, and Campus SaVE Act

A variety of federal requirements, including Title IX, the Clery Act, and the Campus Sexual Violence Elimination Act (Campus SaVE Act), regulate how campuses should respond to cases of stalking and other forms of gender-based violence. A series of questions on the survey asked about respondents’ understanding of these federal mandates (See Figure 2). Respondents indicated greater understanding of the Clery Act than Title IX and the Campus SaVE Act. This is likely the case because campus police departments are frequently responsible for statistical reporting for their campus as required by the Clery Act. The

majority of respondents (75%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they had a good understanding of Clery Act requirements as they apply to stalking.

Respondents also indicated their familiarity with Title IX requirements as they apply to stalking and campus law enforcement. For Title IX as applied to stalking, 59% “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had a good understanding, 21.4% were “neutral,” and 19.6% “disagreed” that they had a good understanding. Respondents had greater understanding of Title IX as applied to campus law enforcement, with 71.4% indicating that they “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had a good understanding, 16.1% were “neutral,” and 12.5% “disagreed” that they had a good understanding.

This survey was conducted approximately three months before the Campus SaVE Act went into effect, therefore it is not surprising that respondents had less understanding of this federal mandate in comparison to the Clery Act and Title IX. Less than half of respondents (42.8%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that they had a good understanding of the Campus SaVE Act, while 28.6% were “neutral” and 28.6% “disagreed” that they had a good understanding.

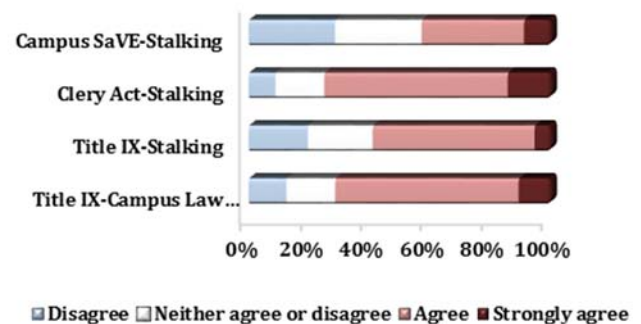


Figure 2. Understanding of Federal Mandates

Perceptions of Campus Stalking

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their perceptions of stalking on college campuses and the response to such crimes. An overwhelming 91% of respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that stalking was a problem on Texas college and university campuses. There was less agreement, however, regarding whether or not stalking was problematic on the respondents’ own campus. About half of respondents either “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that stalking was a problem on their campus, while 42.9% “neither agreed nor disagreed” and 8.9% “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.”

The majority of respondents also believed that their campus responds effectively to stalking cases. When asked about their campus’s response to reports of stalking, the majority (69.1%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that their campus was effectively responding, while 21.8% “neither agreed nor disagreed” and 8.9% “disagreed.”

EFFECTIVENESS OF RESPONSE

Most respondents believed reports of stalking were taken seriously by campus law enforcement and campus administrators (See Figure 3). Almost all respondents either “strongly agreed” (33.9%) or “agreed” (60.7%) with regard to their own department’s response to stalking. About three-fourths of officers in the study “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that campus and university administrators take stalking seriously. In contrast, less than half (46.4%) “strongly agreed” or “agreed” that their local city or county police take stalking reports seriously.

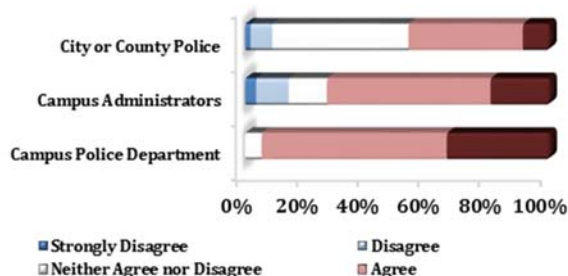


Figure 3. Perceptions of how Organizations view the Seriousness of Stalking

Respondents were generally more optimistic regarding their campus’s response to stalking when compared to other colleges and universities. Figure 4 shows how respondents perceived the effectiveness of response, both generally at colleges/universities in Texas and on their own campus. More than 37% “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that reports of stalking were responded to effectively at colleges and universities in general. Almost 70%, on the other hand, either “agreed” (52.7%) or “strongly agreed” (16.4%) that their campus was effectively responding to reports of stalking.

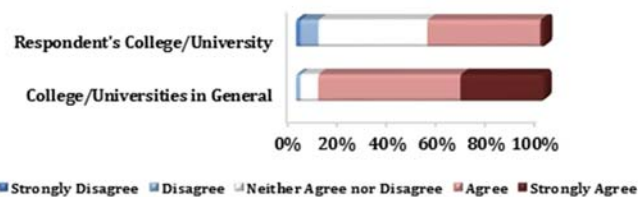


Figure 4. Perceptions of Effective Response to Stalking

Respondents did not have particularly decisive feelings regarding whether or not the administrators at their college or university took a proactive approach to addressing stalking. Most respondents (32.1%), however, “agreed” that their campus’ administration took a proactive approach, followed by 30.4% who “neither agreed nor disagreed” with this statement. Overall, respondents believed their campus’s response to stalking could be improved, with 92.9% of respondents either “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” with this sentiment. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of respondents (91.1%) noted that they would like to be involved in improving their campus’ response

to stalking, and 98.2% wanted to be involved with preventing stalking on their campus.

Response to Campus Stalking

Respondents were also asked a set of questions related to their departmental policies and procedures regarding stalking cases. The majority of respondents (71.4%) reported that their department did not have specific policies and procedures to guide stalking investigations on their campus.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES ON STALKING RESPONSE

Section 42.072 of the Texas penal code defines stalking as a third-degree felony that occurs when an individual, on more than one occasion, knowingly engages in conduct the other person regards as threatening or causing fear of bodily injury, death, or property damage. The stalking behaviors may be directed at the victim, victim’s family or household, or a person with whom the victim has a dating relationship.

In September of 2013, legislation went into effect modifying Texas stalking laws to expand the types of behaviors defined as stalking under the statute and to recognize electronic threats and harassment. Approximately half of respondents (51.8%) were aware of this change, while 33.9% were not and 14.3% were unsure. Respondents were asked which definition of stalking their department uses in responding to stalking complaints. The majority (50.9%) used the definition under Texas statute, 30.9% used both the Texas definition and federal definitions and 10.9% were unsure. Among those who used the definition found in Texas statute, 60.9% were using that which was implemented in 2013, 17.4% were using the definition prior to the 2013 change, and 21.7% were unsure.

When asked specifically about how their department responds to stalking cases, the majority of respondents (73.2%) indicated that victims can make anonymous reports of stalking incidents, while 19.6% of respondents’ departments did not allow anonymous reporting, and 7.1% of respondents were unsure. The majority of respondents’ departments (54.5%) had policies and procedures in place to prevent retaliation against the victim, while 30.9% did not and 14.5% did not know. Respondents were also asked about existing policies to prevent stalking and/or harassment from being used as a form of retaliation for reporting other offenses (i.e., sexual assault, intimate partner violence, hate crimes). Almost half of respondents (46.9%) reported that there was such a policy in place, and 24.5% identified other campus policies that would apply in this situation.

Victims may recant their testimony or cease cooperating with an investigation in stalking cases. The majority of respondents indicated that their department (72.3%) would proceed with the investigation in this situation, while 17% would not and 10.6% were unsure.

Often, campus police departments are involved with training Campus Security Authorities (CSAs), who are specific types of students, employees, and contractors on campus who are federally mandated to report crimes that they are made aware of. The majority of respondents in this study (83%) reported that their departments were involved with training CSAs on their campus. Among the departments who were involved in the training, 23.1% were already providing that training, 53.8% were planning to provide the training, 10.3% had not yet considered providing that training, and 12.8% were unsure of their departments' role in providing this training.

LOCAL AGENCY COLLABORATION

Relatively few respondents noted that they or their department were currently involved with collaborative efforts to improve response to stalking (see Figure 5). Fewer than half of respondents (42.9%) reported that their departments were involved with an on-campus group focused on improving response to stalking, and even fewer (7.3%) reported that their departments were involved with an off-campus group for this purpose.

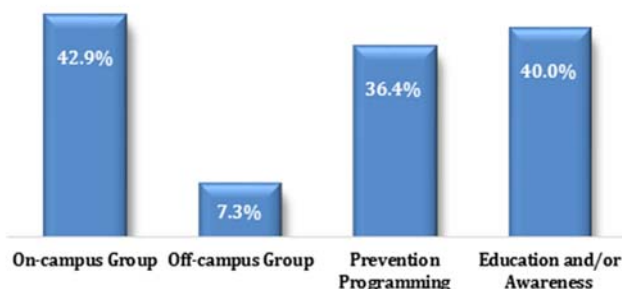


Figure 5: Agency Collaboration and Campus Programming Involvement

Few of the respondents indicated that their departments took part in stalking prevention programming or education/awareness efforts. About one-third of respondents (36.4%) noted departmental involvement with prevention efforts on their campus, while 60% of respondents' departments were not involved and 3.6% were unsure whether their departments participated in prevention programming. Likewise, about 40% of respondents reported that their departments were involved with stalking education and/or awareness; 54.5% were not involved, and 5.5% were unsure if their departments were involved.

Campus police departments may partner with other local entities, formally or informally, to ensure that victims have access to comprehensive services. Figure 6 shows the percentage of respondents who noted that their department had either formal or informal agreements with other local criminal justice, healthcare, and/or victim advocacy groups. Informal collaboration was significantly more common than formalized collaboration.

The most common type of informal collaboration reported was between the campus police department and local law enforcement, with 62.5% of respondents noting that their department

participated in such an arrangement. Informal collaboration was also reported between campus police departments and community victim advocates (25%), college or university administration (57.1%), and prosecution (41.1%). Significantly fewer respondents (16.1%) noted that their department collaborated with healthcare providers, and 17.9% reported informal collaboration with campus victim advocates.

Formalized collaborative agreements between campus police departments and local service providers were much less common than informal inter-agency collaboration. The most common type of formal collaboration, however, was with local law enforcement (30.4%), followed by formalized agreements with college or university administration (7.1%).

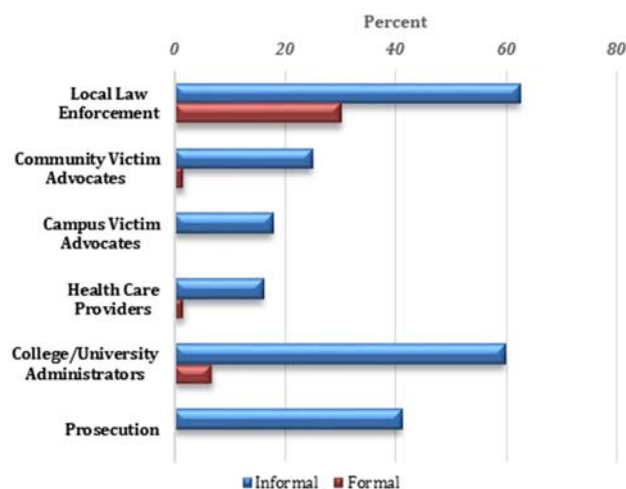


Figure 6. Informal and Formal Collaboration

Most respondents indicated that their department shares case information and evidence about stalking cases with the Title IX Coordinator(s) on their campus. The majority of their departments (70.9%) provided notice of reported stalking cases to their Title IX Coordinator(s), and 63.6% shared evidence from case investigation with the Title IX Coordinator(s). The victim report (42.9%) was the most common type of evidence shared, followed by suspect report (39.3%), witnesses (33.9%), and physical evidence (19.6%).

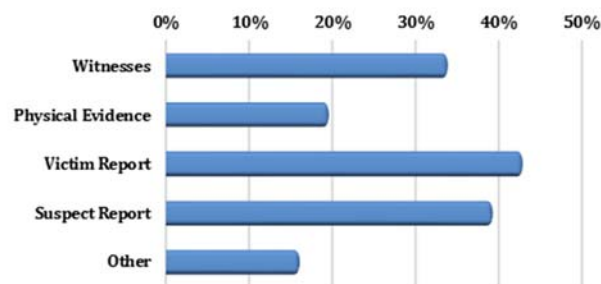


Figure 7. Type of Information Shared with Campus Title IX Coordinator

CONTACT WITH VICTIMS AND SUSPECTS

Most of the campus police officers surveyed (85.1%) noted that their department stayed in contact with victims regarding the status of their case. Departments were less likely to stay in contact with suspects, however, with only 48.9% of respondents noting that they remained in contact with suspects regarding the status of the case.

The majority of the respondents noted their departments provided stalking victims and suspects with information regarding their legal rights. Victims were more likely to receive this information than suspects, with 87.2% of respondents noting that they had provided this information to victims as compared to 64.6% doing so for suspects. Figure 8 demonstrates the various ways in which victims and/or suspects may be informed about their rights. Respondents most commonly reported providing this information with a paper or booklet handed to the victim by the officer. Over half of respondents (58.9%) noted that they verbally provided victims with information regarding their rights. Similarly, 53.6% of respondents' departments provided victim rights information verbally. Providing victims with a link to a website did not occur often.

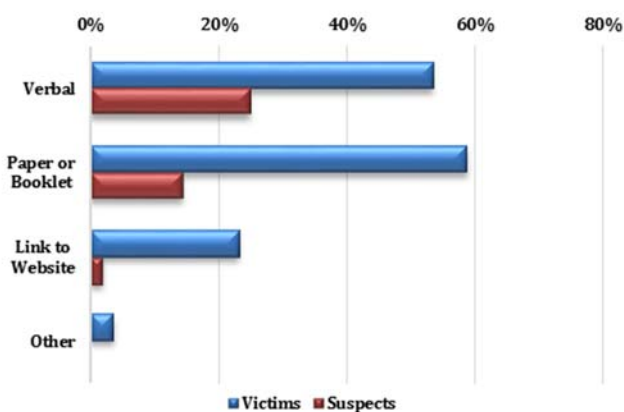


Figure 8. Methods of Providing Victim/Suspect Information about Legal Rights

In terms of providing information to suspects, respondents most commonly reported that they verbally informed suspects of their rights (25%), while 14.3% indicated that they provided this information to suspects in writing or via paper or booklet. Providing links to a website occurred infrequently.

CAMPUS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Many of the officers surveyed noted that their department provides stalking victims and suspects with information regarding campus policies and procedures. Victims were more likely than suspects to receive such information. While 64.6% of respondents reported that their department provides victims with information regarding campus policies and procedures, only about 25% of respondents indicated that they provided this information to suspects.

Figure 9 shows the methods of disseminating information about campus policies and procedures. The most common

method of providing campus policy and procedure information was verbally for both victims (41.1%) and suspects (23.2%). Nearly 33.9% reported providing paper copies of campus policies and procedures to victims, compared to 12.5% reporting providing this to suspects. Respondents were also more likely to report providing victims with a link to a website containing this information (reported by 21.4%) as compared to providing this information to suspects (reported by 10.7%). Additionally, 7.1% of respondents reported providing this information to victims via other means, while none reported using other means to provide this information to suspects.

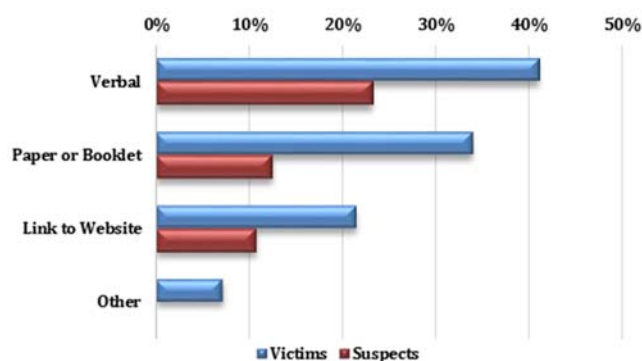


Figure 9. Methods of Providing Victims/Suspects with Campus Policies and Procedure Information

VICTIM RESOURCES

Respondents were also asked about their knowledge of victim resources and whether their departments provided resource information to victims. The majority of respondents were aware of individuals and agencies that assist stalking victims. Three-quarters of respondents were aware of individuals or offices on their campus that assist stalking victims, while 66% were aware of individuals or agencies in their community.

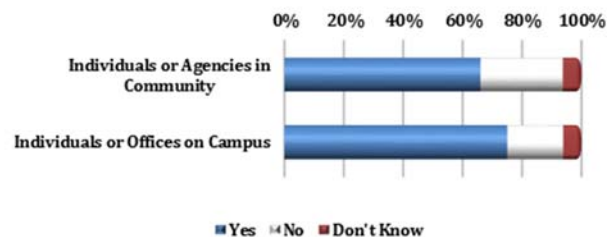


Figure 10. Awareness of Stalking Resources

The majority of respondents (89.6%) reported they would provide a victim with information about the stalking protective order, while 2.1% would not and 8.3% were unsure. The vast majority of respondents also noted that their department provided victims with resource information (Figure 11). The most common information provided regarded counseling centers (93.5%), followed by student services (89.6%), Title IX Coordinators (77.1%), student health services (73.8%), community advocacy centers (71.4%), and campus advocacy centers (51.3%).

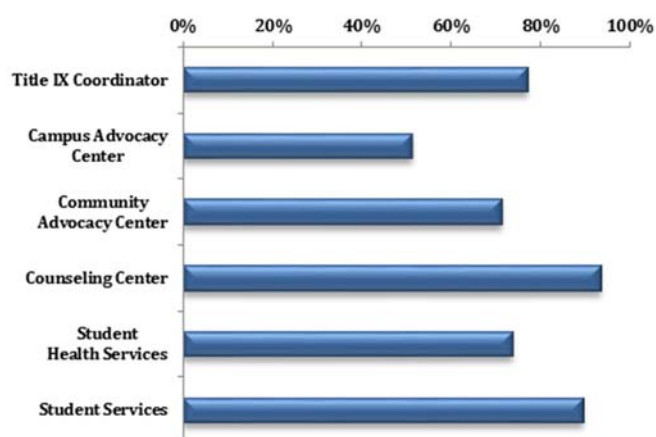


Figure 11. Victim Resource Information

Conclusion

This study was designed to fill a gap in the research about campus police response to stalking at colleges and universities. Little is known about the role of campus law enforcement officers in terms of training and response to stalking cases or to the victims and suspects involved. Findings presented here provide information about policies and procedures related to stalking cases at colleges and universities in Texas. Given the prevalence of stalking on campus and also the complexities of complying with multiple federal regulations, it is important for campus administrators and police departments to consider how their policies and practices are operating and ways in which they

could be improved. It is also important for communities, local law enforcement departments, government officials, and victim service providers to consider the needs of campus police departments and ways in which campuses can collaborate with and be supported by these agencies in their efforts to effectively prevent and respond to stalking on campus. The varying local, state, and federal statutes and mandates make understanding and responding to incidents of stalking on college and university campuses. More attention to this issue is necessary to prevent these crimes from occurring and/or escalating. Importantly, nearly all of the campus police officers who participated in this study indicated a desire to be involved in improving their campus's response to stalking incidents. College and university campuses in Texas and throughout the nation should capitalize on this to build partnerships to develop the most effective strategies for responding to campus violence.

Endnotes

- ¹ Buhi, E. R., Clayton, H., & Surrency, H. H. (2009). Stalking victimization among college women and subsequent help-seeking behaviors. *Journal of American College Health, 57*(4), 419-426.
- ² Jordan, C. E., Wilcox, P., & Pritchard, A. J. (2007). Stalking acknowledgement and reporting among college women experiencing intrusive behaviors: Implications for the emergence of a "classic stalking case". *Journal of Criminal Justice, 35*(5), 556-569.
- ³ Reynolds, B. W., Henson, B., & Fisher, B. S. (2012). Stalking in the twilight zone: Extent of cyberstalking victimization and offending among college students. *Deviant Behavior, 33*(1), 1-25.
- ⁴ Supra note 1
- ⁵ Supra note 2
- ⁶ Supra note 1
- ⁷ Supra note 2

Resources

National Stalking Resource Center

<http://www.victimsofcrime.org/our-programs/stalking-resource-center>

Texas Attorney General—Information on Stalking

<https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/victims/stalking.shtml>

Not Alone (most information also applies to stalking)

<https://www.notalone.gov/>

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