



Knowledge. Accountability. Care.

Bystander Engagement & Risk Reduction Strategies for Sex Discrimination

FACTS

- No one is ever to blame for being the victim of gender-based violence. There is no mistake in judgment or “poor decision” that can make a person “deserve” to be victimized by another person.
- Victims can be female or male and can identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender. Perpetrators can be female or male and can identify as heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender.
- Most victims are perpetrated against by someone they know.
- Sexual violence does not happen because of a miscommunication. Most sexual assaults are planned in some way by the perpetrator. Most perpetrators establish some level of trust and rapport with a victim before the assault.
- Individuals who perpetrate sexual violence typically target a victim who they *perceive* has some vulnerability that they can exploit and that will make the victim less likely to report the assault. For example, a perpetrator might target a first year student, someone newly out in GLBT community, an individual with a mental health or physical health issue.
- Sexual violence is about the perpetrator asserting power and control over the victim—NOT about sexual attraction.
- Most perpetrators of sexual violence do not use a weapon (i.e. knife, gun) to facilitate the crime, but will use pressure, psychological/social coercion (e.g. If you really liked me you would do this) and/or will take advantage of incapacitated state of victim due to alcohol, drugs, etc. to commit the assault.

RISK REDUCTION THROUGH KNOWLEDGE & PLANNING

Educate yourself! The more you know about how most perpetrators of gender-based violence operate, how to identify these types of behaviors, and the resources available to potential victims, the better prepared you will be if something happens to you or someone you know. Perpetrators of gender-based violence count on the individuals around the victim to look the other way, not get involved, and even blame the victim for the perpetrator’s actions. At Xavier University we strive to create a cultural in which we take of one another and support individuals who may be experiencing gender-based violence. Below are some tips on reducing risk and on how to help someone else who may have experienced gender-based violence.

- **Trust your instincts**—if something doesn’t feel right, speak up and seek resources. If you feel unsafe in any situation, go with your gut. If you see something suspicious, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.) or XUPD at 513-745-1000.

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- **If you see someone isolating another person** who looks uncomfortable or who may be intoxicated, intervene! For example, let the person who is trying to remove your friend from the group know that you will be taking her or him home instead.
- **Be aware of the effects** of drugs used to facilitate sexual assault. If you feel extremely tired, out of it or more intoxicated for amount of alcohol you may have consumed, you may have been drugged. Find your friends and ask them to leave with you as soon as possible. If you suspect you have been drugged, go to a hospital and ask to be tested. Similarly, if you see a friend reacting in a way that is atypical for the amount of alcohol they have consumed or they are acting out of character for the situation, ask her or him to leave with you and get them to a safe place immediately. If you suspect you or a friend has been drugged, contact law enforcement immediately (local authorities can be reached by calling 911 in most areas of the U.S.). Be explicit with doctors so they can give you the correct tests (you will need a urine test and possibly others).
- **Don't accept drinks from people you don't know or trust.** If you choose to accept a drink, go with the person to the bar to order it, watch it being poured, and carry it yourself. At parties, don't drink from the punch bowls or other large, common open containers.
- **Talk with your friends** about watching out for each other and not leaving one person behind BEFORE you go out- have a plan and stick to it!
- When you go to a social gathering, go with a group of friends. Arrive together, check in with each other throughout the evening, and leave together. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way out of a bad situation.
- **Be aware** of your surroundings. Knowing where you are and who is around you may help you to find a way to get out of a bad situation.
- **Make sure your cell phone is with you** and charged and that you have cab money.
- If you need to get out of an uncomfortable or scary situation here are some things that you can try:
 - **Remember that being in this situation is not your fault.** You did not do anything wrong, it is the person who is making you uncomfortable that is to blame.
 - **Be true to yourself.** Don't feel obligated to do anything you don't want to do. "I don't want to" is always a good enough reason. Do what feels right to you and what you are comfortable with.
 - **Have a code word with your friends or family** so that if you don't feel comfortable you can call them and communicate your discomfort without the person you are with knowing. Your friends or family can then come to get you or make up an excuse for you to leave.
 - **Lie.** If you don't want to hurt the person's feelings it is better to lie and make up a reason to leave than to stay and be uncomfortable, scared, or worse. Some excuses you could use are: needing to take care of a friend or family member, not feeling well, having somewhere else that you need to be, etc.

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- **Try to think of an escape route.** How would you try to get out of the room? Where are the doors? Windows? Are there people around who might be able to help you? Is there an emergency phone nearby?
- **If you and/or the other person have been drinking,** you can say that you would rather wait until you both have your full judgment before doing anything you may regret later.
- **Be true to yourself.** You are not obligated to do anything you don't want to do. "I don't want to" is always a good enough.

BYSTANDER ENGAGEMENT

Bystanders play a critical role in the prevention of gender-based violence. They are individuals who observe violence or witness the conditions that perpetuate violence. They are not directly involved, but have the choice to intervene, speak up, or do something about it. Xavier University promotes a culture of community accountability where bystanders are actively engaged in the prevention of gender-based violence without causing further harm and while minimizing risks to their own safety.

Individuals may not always know what to do even if they want to help. Below are some ways to be an active bystander. To learn more and/or schedule a bystander engagement program and/or gender-based violence prevention program, contact the [Center for Diversity & Inclusion](#) or the [Student Wellness Advocacy Group \(SWAG\) Peer Educators](#). If you or someone else is in immediate danger, dial 911 or call XUPD at 513-745-1000.

- Watch out for friends and colleagues. If you see someone who looks like they could be in trouble or need help, ask if they are okay.
- Confront people who seclude, hit on, try to hook up with, or have sex with people who are incapacitated. Recruit others to help you engage if possible to address potential safety concerns.
- Speak up when someone uses derogatory or harassing language about others and/or discusses plans to take sexual advantage of another person.
- Believe someone who discloses gender-based violence and help connect them to resources.