

# Implementing a more comprehensive trauma-informed training program for Title IX and UC Police Department Employees

*Using data from the Survivors + Allies' 2021 survey of the UC community*

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## Background & Purpose

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When Title IX and university police staff are not adequately trained to work with survivors of sexual violence, it can lead to severe and negative repercussions. Survivors may experience re-traumatization due to their interactions with these institutions, compounding the initial trauma and negatively affecting their mental health, academic performance, social connections, and sense of safety.<sup>1–3</sup> Research highlights that marginalized groups—including undocumented survivors, survivors of color, gender-diverse individuals and LGBTQIA+ survivors—are especially vulnerable to feeling unsafe, disbelieved, or dismissed by police, which discourages them from reporting incidents of sexual violence and increases risks for both themselves and the broader campus community.<sup>4–9</sup>

Despite widespread student reports of negative experiences with Title IX investigators and university police, the Title IX office is still promoted as a primary resource for students due to legal requirements.<sup>2,10,11</sup> Survivors and Allies' 2021 survey findings revealed that only a little over half (56%) of survivors agreed that they received adequate information about the reporting process from Title IX staff. This is a common experience amongst students across universities who seek out the Title IX office as their initial resource, with many reporting a lack of clear information or transparency about the reporting process.<sup>2,12</sup>

The institutional process that Title IX follows frequently excludes input from sexual assault researchers and advocates, limiting the use of evidence-based practices.<sup>2,13</sup> Additionally, Title IX investigators are required to maintain neutrality, preventing them from validating survivors' experiences, further reducing the likelihood of survivors receiving appropriate care without re-traumatization.<sup>13</sup> Given that high percentages of survivors of sexual violence report being re-traumatized by the Title IX process, with severe academic, social, and mental health repercussions, a more comprehensive trauma-informed training program is urgently needed for Title IX investigators and staff.

## Methods

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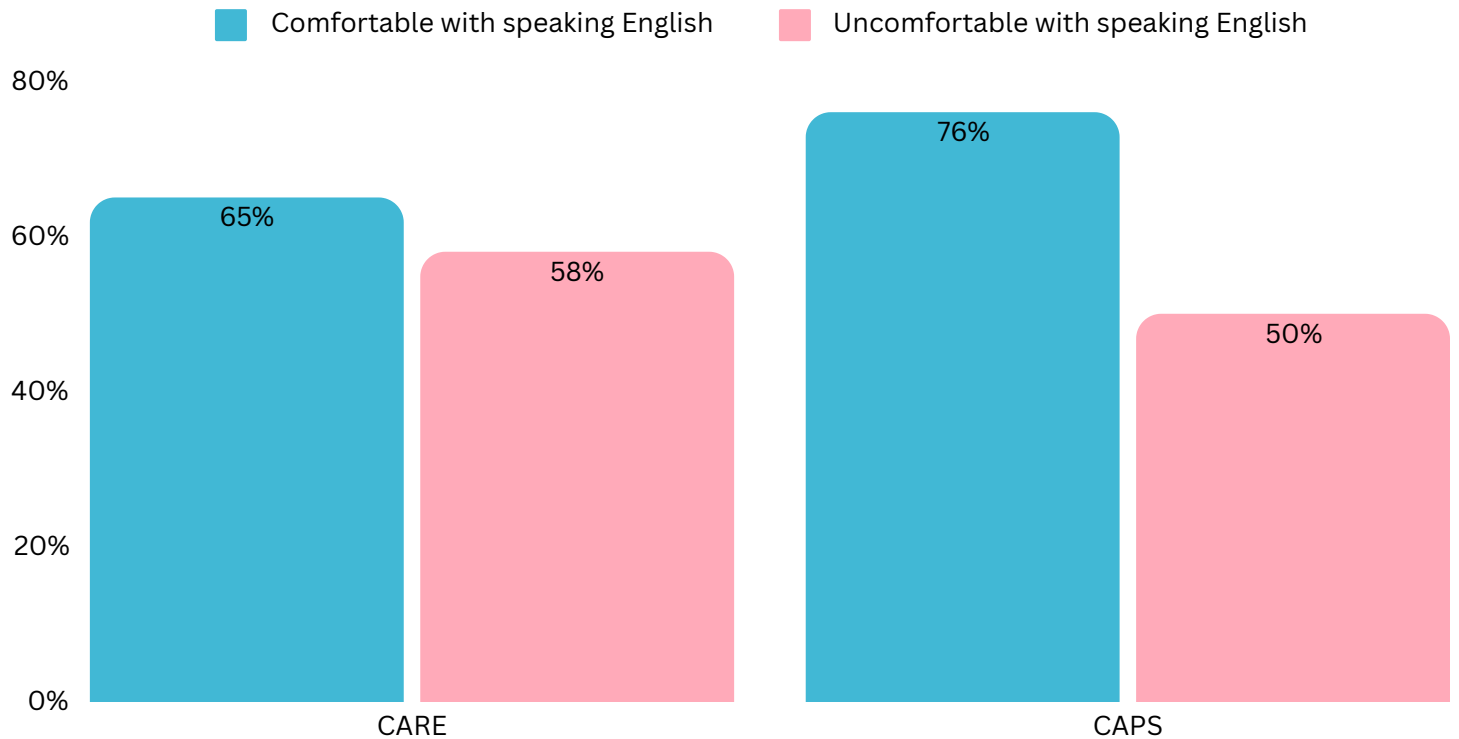
In 2021, UCLA student organization Survivors + Allies (S+A) conducted a research study surveying students across all 10 UC campuses to evaluate students' awareness, utilization, and evaluation of on- and off-campus resources for survivors of SVSH, including the Title IX office, CARE, CAPS, and UCPD. You can read the resulting report and associated academic publications [here](#).

The resulting sample consisted of:

- 1,223 total students (52% undergraduate and 48% graduate)
- 62% cisgender women, 21% cisgender men, 2% transgender people, 18% nonbinary and people of other gender identities
- 42% of students identified as LGBQA+
- 59% as students of color
- 17% as international students
- 41% identified as survivors of SVSH

# Survey participants that identified as comfortable speaking English were more likely to know about healing resources for survivors.

Have you ever heard of the following resources for survivors of sexual violence?



# The UCs promote the Title IX Office and UCPD as frontline resources for SVSH survivors.

Using publicly available information from UC websites, we demonstrate that the **UCs are systematically funding reporting resources such as the Title IX office and UCPD more than survivor-centered healing resources.** For instance, UC Merced has just one confidential CARE advocate serving over 9,000 students, but funds 7 Title IX employees and 12 police officers.

**Title IX Offices and UCPD Are Funded More Than Healing Resources on Every UC Campus.**

UC Campus	No. CARE Advocates*	No. Title IX Employees	No. UCPD Officers	No. Students Enrolled**
UCSF	2	12	46	6,032
UCB	7	17	29	45,699
UCSB	3	7	22	24,271
UCM	1	7	12	9,148
UCSC	2	7	11	19,764
UCI	4	NA***	30	37,350
UCR	3	8	18	26,426
UCD	1	NA	32	40,848
UCSD	3	15	34	42,376
UCLA	4	6	35	46,678

\*Number of CARE Advocates, UCPD Offices, and Title IX employees as of Summer 2024

\*\*Number of students enrolled as of Fall 2023

\*\*\*Not publicly available

In open-ended responses to the survey, many survivors confirmed that **healing resources like CARE and CAPS are underfunded** and unable to adequately serve survivors' needs.

"I am really happy that CARE exists to help people but it is crazy under funded to a ridiculous point and the people working there are terribly overworked, it really seems this is NOT a priority for the university." - **cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, Hispanic/Latine**

"CAPS [was the least helpful resource], I understand they are under funded and short-staffer, it still hurts individuals who really need help." - **cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, Hispanic/Latine**

Further, **UC websites and trainings direct survivors to the Title IX office and UCPD as frontline resources**, relegating confidential healing resources like CARE and CAPS to a brief description at the bottom of a webpage that primarily highlights reporting resources:

- UC annual Sexual Violence and Sexual Harassment (SVSH) trainings highlight Title IX and reporting processes, with brief mentions of confidential resources like CARE. For example, the most recent UCLA SVSH training for all students only mentions CARE in one slide at the end of the training.
- Most UC Office of Civil Rights websites direct survivors to report, highlighting Title IX and reporting options as the primary form of support for SVSH. These websites feature information about Title IX and filing a claim/report and don't explain confidentiality. In addition, the websites devote minimal space to other confidential resources like CARE.

Although overall the same percentage (63%) of students reported that they had heard of the Title IX office and CARE, there were important **disparities in knowledge for marginalized students** that reflect the UC's prioritization of reporting resources:

- 54% of international students had **never** heard of CARE, compared with 31% of domestic students
- 42% of students uncomfortable speaking English had **never** heard of CARE, compared with 35% of students comfortable speaking English
- 41% of students uncomfortable speaking English **didn't know** that CARE serves survivors regardless of when their experience happened, compared with 29% of students comfortable speaking English
- 32% of Asian students, and 34% of Latinx students, **didn't know** that CARE serves survivors regardless of when their experience happened, compared with 27% of white students

***While the UCs promote the Title IX Office and UCPD as frontline resources, the survivors in our survey reported that these resources were harmful and even "re-traumatizing."***

- 57% of all survivors –and 100% of Black and Latine survivors – who had gone to the Title IX office **did not feel respected** by Title IX staff.
- LGBTQIA+ student survivors were 64% less likely to trust UCPD compared to their heterosexual peers.
- 40% of LGBTQIA+ students would be "very uncomfortable" reporting an incident of gender discrimination to the police (compared to 29% for all students).
- 38% of survivors who went to Title IX **did not feel safe** interacting with Title IX staff.

“Title IX, CARE - Title IX traumatized me almost as much as the assault itself. The process was incredibly painful and the individuals I encountered were not kind or supportive. I was not offered any actual help and felt like I had no assistance navigating how to manage working while my abuser was still in the same workplace” - **cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, White, graduate student**

“Police did nothing when I said I was followed. Because being followed is not a crime. The officer I spoke to even said, “I could follow you right now if I wanted to.” - **Bisexual, Hispanic/Latine, cis-woman, undergraduate student**

“The police don’t believe stories like mine and trying to get me to go to them just made me feel worse.” - **Lesbian, White, nonbinary, undergraduate student**

“[UC]PD [was least helpful]. My interactions with the police only served to traumatize me further. Throughout the entire process I felt belittles, ignored, and disregarded. While I did receive an emergency protective order from the police upon my initial interaction with them, once my abuser was released on bail my interaction with them got less and less productive until they eventually ignored me. After a year, my case was ultimately rejected.” - **cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, White, other role**

“Title IX [was least helpful]... made me feel re-victimized, they did not help with anything, only made me feel there was nothing they could do. It was like a dead end in my process. I hurt psychologically almost as much as when I suffered sexual violence.” - **graduate student**

“UCPD was unhelpful because they refused to believe I was raped.” - **cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, Asian, undergraduate student**

**It is possible for the UCs to provide survivor-centered care with adequately trained employees – survivors in our study reported much better experiences with CARE, a confidential resource whose advocates are trained in trauma-informed techniques**

- 30% of students agreed that they felt safe when interacting with Title IX compared to 80% of students agreeing that they felt safe when interacting with CARE.
- 81% of survivors agreed that they felt emotionally supported and respected by CARE staff, while only 36% of survivors agreed that they felt emotionally supported and respected by Title IX staff.

## **Policy Recommendations**

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### **Bi-Annual Trauma Informed Trainings**

- Title IX and UCPD should hold bi-annual trauma-informed trainings for all of their staff. One training should be hosted by a UC-based confidential office such as CARE. The second training can be conducted by student organizations, confidential campus resources, or third-parties such as nonprofits.
  - The trainings should cover: active listening when someone is in distress, the concept of “re-traumatization”, the neurobiology of trauma, myths about rape culture, trauma-informed terminology, and the importance of survivors having control over the choices they make in their healing process.

### **Training to Clarify the Reporting Process for All Students**

- Title IX and UCPD should receive standardized training on ways to explain what the reporting process is, how it works, and how students may be negatively impacted if a Title IX investigator files a report.

- Visual aids should be provided to survivors when explaining this process to accommodate visual and auditory learning styles, especially in a moment of vulnerability.
- Translated documents should be available for students whose first language is not English.

### **Better Promotion of Non-Punitive Resources**

- Punitive resources should not be the frontline resources for students, who first and foremost are in need of mental health support and confidential guidance and information.
- Funding should support more comprehensive communications efforts to alert university staff, including faculty, TAs, housing administrators, Title IX investigators, and UCPD, to the importance of confidential survivor-focused resources (such as CARE) in the aftermath of SV.
  - Especially for international students who are 32% less likely to know what Title IX is compared to domestic students and more likely to seek out punitive resources.

### **UCPD required to work with the CARE Program**

- Calls with UCPD are merged with a CARE Advocate or similarly qualified person on call (medical chaperone model).
- UCPD will be required to inform a survivor of the option to have a CARE advocate or similarly trained person on-site before working with a survivor. If the survivor requests a support person, they must be present during all interactions with UCPD.

### **Hiring diverse staff to provide support to students of different identities and backgrounds**

- This includes but is not limited to Black, Asian American and Pacific Islander, Latine, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, Transfer, Out of State, non-english speaking, and International students.
- Student survivors should be able to request a translator when meeting with Title IX investigators or UCPD officers (similar to what is offered in medical offices/ hospitals).

### **Implement a UC-Wide Trauma-Informed Training Guideline for UC Title IX Offices**

- The S+A Summer 2023 Policy Fellows team analyzed the [UC Title IX websites](#) and created scorecards to rate their accessibility, inclusivity, ease of navigation, and how trauma informed they are. Overall, the offices' websites received a failing grade (an average of 64%, or a D-), with even lower averages for being trauma-informed (48%). Only one university, UC Berkeley, received a score above 50% for being trauma-informed.
- To ensure that all UC Title IX staff receive the proper training, the UC system should fund and implement all of S+A's listed recommendations and trauma-informed training at each of its universities. This will prevent disparities in training and support between UC Title IX offices.

## **Conclusion**

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The research conducted by UCLA's Survivors + Allies highlights significant shortcomings in the training and effectiveness of Title IX and university police staff in supporting survivors of sexual violence. The study reveals that marginalized groups, such as survivors of color and LGBTQIA+ students, often feel unsafe and unsupported, leading to underreporting and further endangerment. The findings underscore the need for improved training and the inclusion of sexual assault researchers and advocates in the Title IX process to prevent re-traumatization and ensure adequate support for all survivors. Addressing these issues is crucial for fostering a safer and more supportive campus environment.

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