

# UC Student Awareness of Resources for Survivors on Campus

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

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## Background & Purpose

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Most university campuses have resources for survivors of sexual violence, such as the Title IX office or mental health services. Title IX offices are not confidential, meaning that an investigator could open a case with or without the survivors' consent; other resources are confidential, like therapists. However, these resources are difficult for survivors to navigate, particularly in the aftermath of a traumatic event. For instance, survivor access to campus resources can look different based on whether an incident occurred on- or off-campus, and whether the student's perpetrator is also a student at the same university. Resources are critical in supporting survivors through their healing journey; yet across the United States (U.S.), most students are unaware of campus-based resources available to them.<sup>(1,2)</sup> Moreover, the students who are aware of resources are often confused about how, when, and where these resources can help them.<sup>(3)</sup> Survivors need timely and accessible resources for their mental health and safety, such as locating temporary housing or restraining orders if they are in danger.

Marginalized student groups are particularly at risk of not knowing how to access critical resources for survivors on campus.<sup>(4)</sup> Because we focus on these student groups in other briefs, **in this brief we explore overall student awareness of four resources at the University of California (UC) campuses: Campus Assault & Resources Education (CARE), Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS), Title IX, and UC Police Departments (UCPD).** CARE and CAPS are survivor- and mental health-focused resources that are confidential, whereas Title IX and UCPD are not confidential resources that are investigative. In other words, reporting to Title IX and UCPD initiates an investigative process that could result in punishment for the perpetrator(s). In this brief we also highlight major disparities in awareness of resources for students from underrepresented and marginalized groups.

(1) Franklin, C. A., Menaker, T. A., & Jin, H. R. (2019). University and community resources for sexual assault survivors: Familiarity with and use of services among college students. *Journal of school violence*, 18(1), 1-20.

(2) Kathan, S. C., Lai, J., Wilf, S., & Imbroane, M. (2024). Student knowledge of university confidential resources and Title IX training effectiveness. *Violence against women*, 10778012231225234.

(3) Pinchevsky, G. M., & Hayes, B. E. (2023). Understanding college Students' perceived help-seeking knowledge and awareness about sexual misconduct policies and procedures. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 38(1-2), 726-749.

(4) Mitra, A., Swendeman, D., Sumstine, S., Sorin, C. R., Bloom, B. E., & Wagman, J. A. (2022). Structural barriers to accessing the campus assault resources and education (CARE) offices at the University of California (UC) campuses. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 37(21-22), NP19468-NP19490.

## 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 LGBTQA+
- 59% as students of color
- 17% as international students
- 41% identified as survivors of SVSH

## Results

### ***Students lack basic awareness of on-campus resources.***

- 41% of students don't know what the Title IX office does
  - International students are 32% less likely to know what the Title IX office does
- 38% of students have never heard of CARE (the UC system's primary confidential resource for survivors)
  - 57% of international students have never heard of CARE
- 28% of students have never heard of CAPS
  - Among student survivors that indicated low levels of comfort with speaking English, 50% have never heard of CAPS
- 22% of students don't know whether international students are covered under Title IX legislation
- 29% of students don't know whether undocumented students are covered under Title IX legislation

### ***Most students don't know which resources are confidential.***

- 37% of students incorrectly thought the Title IX office is confidential
  - That percentage rises to 53% among student survivors that indicated low levels of comfort with speaking English
- 53% of students knew that CAPS is confidential
  - Only 41% of international students knew that CAPS was confidential
- 54% of students knew the CARE is confidential
  - Only 47% of international students knew that CARE was confidential

### ***Students report difficulty accessing confidential resources.***

- 51% of survivors are not currently connected to adequate mental health services or social support for their experiences. Among this subsample were:
  - 65% of student survivors that indicated low levels of comfort with speaking English
  - 62% of survivors that identified as Asian
- 31% of survivors reported difficulties accessing an appointment through CAPS
- Marginalized student groups wanted more therapists who looked like them
- In open-ended responses, survivors shared difficulties accessing CARE because of too few staff available to help them, and in accessing CAPS because they did not have the university health insurance:

***"I think [UC] should improve access to CAPS and CARES because they are hard to get access to!!! Improve that first before offering other stuff that may be unnecessary." - cis-woman, LGBTQIA+, Hispanic/Latine, graduate student***

# Policy Recommendations

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## **Enact university-wide notifications of any and all changes to SVSH resources.**

- Any changes to student access of SVSH resources (i.e., whether students can access a resource if the incident occurred off-campus, if the perpetrator has to be a current student, etc.) , whether federal, state-wide, or university-wide, should be brought to the attention of students, faculty, and staff through campus-wide notification. Any important documents and translations of shared information should be accessible to students, faculty, and staff as well.

## **Increase availability of resources for survivors.**

- CARE offices must be funded and staffed appropriately to handle the necessary number of survivors.
- Each SVSH resource offered at each of the UCs should offer public, clear information regarding when students are able to access them as a resource. Specifically whether off-campus incidents are covered, time limits on reporting, etc.

## **UCs should inform students of SVSH community-based treatment centers near the campus and their roles/capacities.**

- It is important to inform students of the role of SVSH treatment centers located in the community, as these centers offer critically important services for survivors, such as rape kit testing and legal support.

## **Survivors of sexual violence should receive prompt mental health care regardless of their insurance coverage.**

- Survivors who have experienced a recent incident of sexual violence must have access to university mental health resources in a timely manner (ideally within 24 hours) regardless of their health insurance coverage.

## **UCs should be clear about differences between confidential and non-confidential resources on all sites, platforms, and presentations.**

# Conclusion

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Resources like mental health services and confidential legal advice are critical to support survivors' health and wellbeing. Yet, disturbingly high percentages of UC students are unaware of critical resources to support survivors; for instance, more than one-third of students had never heard of CARE, which is the UC's primary confidential resource for survivors. Aligning with other research, we found that marginalized student groups, such as international students and non-English fluent students, are less aware of resources and of the critical distinction between confidential and non-confidential resources. Finally, we found that survivors reported high barriers to accessing confidential resources, primarily because these resources were underfunded and survivors faced structural barriers (like lack of insurance).

When survivors can't access critical resources for their care, they face detrimental and potentially life-long impacts to their mental and physical health, as well as to their academic achievements, financial stability, and social relationships.<sup>(5,6)</sup> The UCs must better advertise the resources available to students, in particular conducting specialized outreach to marginalized student groups and translating key documents so that students with low levels of comfort with speaking English don't miss critical information. The UCs should also better instruct students as to the

difference between confidential and non-confidential resources, and ensure that all survivors have access to mental health support regardless of their insurance coverage.

(5) Graham, A. C., Mallinson, R. K., Krall, J. R., & Annan, S. L. (2021). Sexual assault survivors' perceived helpfulness of university-affiliated resources. *Violence against women*, 27(10), 1758-1773.

(6) Lorenzo, L., & Rafael, S. (2020). Exploring the academic experience of college student survivors of sexual violence. *Open Access Library Journal*, 7(05), 1.

## Acknowledgments

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