

Preliminary Research Findings on Tech-Facilitated Sexual Violence Among Higher Education Students in California

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What is Tech-Facilitated Sexual Violence?

Technology-Facilitated Sexual Violence (TFSV) refers to “a range of behaviors where digital technologies are used to facilitate both virtual and face-to-face sexually based harms” [1]. TFSV includes online sexual harassment, cyberstalking, image-based sexual exploitation, and the creation and distribution of nonconsensual sexual content using Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools such as ChatGPT and Grok.

Why Addressing TFSV Matters

Survivor advocates and researchers have continued to raise the alarm about the impact of TFSV given the rapid proliferation of AI use across California [2]. Despite this, universities continue to encourage student use of AI, with the California State University (CSU) system partnering with Alphabet, OpenAI, and other Big Tech companies to “create an AI-powered higher education system” [4]. The threat and impact of TFSV cannot be overstated. In January 2026, California Attorney General Bonta launched an investigation into xAI’s Grok due to users’ ability to create and distribute sexual content featuring women and children [3]. It is clear that TFSV remains a critical issue.

Title IX policies do not yet explicitly prohibit nonconsensual AI or LLM-generated content, and, the California Education Code (§66262.5) does not yet include AI-generated nonconsensual sexual content as a form of sexual violence [5]. Survivors, who already may feel shame and stigma about their experience, may hesitate to seek support if their schools don’t clearly explain that TFSV is covered under institutional policies and that survivors of TFSV can receive support.

About S+A's 2025 Research Study

From May 2025 to January 2026, student organization Survivors + Allies collected data about issues relating to sexual violence through an IRB approved study. Participants in the study consisted of students from across the California community colleges, CSU's, and UC's. The research study was community-led, meaning that survivors of sexual violence collaborated to design a trauma-informed, survivor-centered survey and interview guide, in efforts to provide opportunities for other survivors to share feedback on and personal recommendations to improve campus resources.

Because there is an urgent need for data about TFSV, this research brief shares preliminary findings from the study which will be published in a report released April 2026. This brief includes data from survivors in the survey who reported experiencing online sexual harm.

Please contact us at uclasurvivorsandallies@gmail.com for any questions about the study methodology.

Preliminary Findings on TFSV

Nearly 1 in 7 survivors reported experiencing online sexual harm.

Almost 70% of survivors of online sexual harm never reached out to their institution for support.

More than 40% of survivors of online sexual harm never reached out to anyone for support, whether on or off campus.

In Survivors' Own Words

WHY SURVIVORS DIDN'T REPORT:

“ I felt as though I would not be taken seriously”
— *CSU Undergraduate Student* ”

“I didn't know confidential advocates existed at the time and was also hesitant to report the incident/felt like i had to report if i talked to anyone”
— *Community College Undergraduate Student* ”

“I didn't feel like it counted enough”
— *UC Undergraduate Student* ”

“I wasn't aware that I could reach out to a resource.”
— *Community College Undergraduate Student* ”

SURVIVORS' EXPERIENCES WITH CAMPUS RESOURCES:

“They did not have any counselors trained to work with the LGBTQ community.”
— *Private College Undergraduate Student* ”

“I don't think they [Title IX office staff] even believed me based on how I was treated”
— *UC Graduate Student* ”

“They [Title IX office staff] pretended to care, but in the end there wasn't much they can do. I had all the documentation, I had all the reports, supporting evidence, and they would refer to "X" person but in the end, it didn't change the outcome”
— *UC Graduate Student* ”

Policy Recommendations

While the federal TAKE IT DOWN Act (signed May 2025) prohibits nonconsensual intimate imagery and requires platforms to remove content within 48 hours, it does not call for campus-specific policies, training, or support services—making state legislation essential [6]. We recommend that the state legislature act to make changes to the California Education Code and that universities amend their Title IX Policies.

Specifically we recommend the following:

1. Add AI-specific language to Cal. EDC §66262.5 to specify that “generated” or “created” nonconsensual sexual content including AI-generated images, video, and audio, is prohibited; ensuring survivors of TFSV are explicitly eligible for campus resources.
2. Require public institutions to update mandatory SVSH trainings to include information on TFSV and how survivors can access support.
3. Mandate resources for TFSV on university Title IX office websites, including resources where survivors can find guidance on content removal.
4. Require college campuses to provide resources for survivors of TFSV, including free legal resources and support with take down services.

References

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For more information, please also view our website and comprehensive report below:

<https://csw.ucla.edu/research/sexual-violence-and-intersectionality/survivors-allies/>

https://csw.ucla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Survivors-and-Allies-Report_From-Surviving-to-Healing.pdf

