Sexual violence resource for Christian faith-based institutions
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Esperanza United has chosen to use “@” in place of the masculine “o” when referring to people that are either gender neutral or both masculine and feminine in make-up. This decision reflects our commitment to gender inclusion and recognizes the important contributions that everyone makes to our communities.

Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence and Elder Abuse for the Working with Student Populations Campus Consortium from Esperanza United.
Introduction

For many students, college provides a rich time of learning, values formation, and tremendous personal growth. To maximize this growth and development, students need to explore and push beyond their comfort zones. At the same time, they need to know that they are safe and cared for.

Sometimes, despite the best efforts of college leaders and administrators, sexual violence can undermine that safety on campus. In fact, college students are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, especially during their first year on campus. The highest risk is during the first few months of a student’s first and second semesters of college.

Sexual violence is, first and foremost, violence. It is coercive, controlling, manipulative, and non-consensual. It is intended to humiliate, shame, and silence its victims. The tragic result of sexual violence is emotional, spiritual, and physical trauma that can affect the victim for many years to come.

Victims and survivors of sexual violence are not just statistics. They are students, friends, fraternity and sorority members, neighbors, and beloved members of campus communities. Whether we know it or not, everyone on campus knows someone who is affected. In fact, according to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be sexually abused by age 18.

Survivors or sexual violence deserve to be heard, believed, cared for, supported, and provided the resources they need to find justice and heal.

College campuses, and particularly faith-based campuses, can also play a leadership role in preventing sexual violence by breaking the silence, providing education, developing protocols for faith-based responses, and being gateways to resources. Modeling this faith-based response is important because sexual violence undermines the values that lie at the heart of many faith traditions: respect, human dignity, and compassion. In fact, the tools needed to challenge sexual violence are often rooted in faith traditions.

This resource is written specifically for Christian faith-based institutions and supported by listening sessions with Christian faith-based campuses; additional resources will support the work of faith-based institutions in additional faith traditions.

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2 This statistic is from RAINN (the Rape and Incest National Network) and can be accessed at https://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence.
Right relationship

For example, at the root of the Christian tradition is the concept of “right relationship,” which includes respect for the dignity and humanity of every person as a unique and precious creation made in God’s image. For Christians, the foundation for right relationship was laid in the covenant between humanity and God detailed in Hebrew scripture. When this relationship was broken, Christians believe that Jesus was sent to model and restore right relationship. The emphasis on right relationship continues in the Christian concept of the Trinity, which is the template for relationships between people and the created world, people and others, and people and God.

Right relationship is built on compassion, nonviolence, respect, and free will. People are invited into relationship with the Divine. There is never force or manipulation. There is no violence involved. People are not coerced or controlled, beaten or bruised. Instead, God calls to people, and people are given the choice to respond.

Sexual violence is the opposite of right relationship. It is violent, coercive, and manipulative. It forces its victims to do what they do not want to do. It humiliates, shames, and silences its victims. Perpetrators do not recognize and respect the humanity, free will, or sacred worth of their victims. Sexual violence destroys right relationship.

Responsible human sexuality

Christianity teaches that human sexuality is a good and sacred gift, to be used responsibly and in accordance with the church’s values and teachings. Here again, sexual violence is the opposite of this tenet of faith. Sexual violence is not about human sexuality, it is about violence. Sexual violence weaponizes God’s good gift, twisting and warping the victim’s own sexuality against them. And, because human sexuality is so intimate and personal, sexual violence causes unspeakable trauma on a deeply personal level. The resulting damage causes long-term physical, emotional, and spiritual trauma.

Compassion and loving-kindness

Christianity also emphasizes the importance of compassion and loving-kindness as a reflection of God’s love. Christians teach adherents to love others as they love themselves, and to treat others as they themselves want to be treated. In fact, Christians are supposed to be “known by their love.” Christians teach that all people are of sacred worth, and the faith is founded on a radical model of compassion. Jesus frequently modeled a deep, heartfelt compassion for those around him.

Sexual violence is the opposite of compassion and loving-kindness. Sexual violence objectifies and uses people, breaks them apart, humiliates and shames them, and ignores their sacred worth and their own God-given agency.
Fear is the opposite of love

Although each individual’s experience of sexual violence is unique, one common factor for survivors is that during the attack they are in mortal fear for their lives. It is important to note that sexual violence could include lethal weapons and extreme physical force. However, many incidents of sexual assault do not include the use of overt physical violence but instead use coercion, threats, intimidation, and control. This impact on survivors is overwhelming, gut-wrenching and causes trauma that can haunt the victim for many years afterward. Survivors fear going out at night, walking alone, being in strange surroundings, or even being in their own home. Survivors may fear being in relationships, trusting others, or taking risks. Student survivors may experience traumatic responses such as difficulty learning and concentrating, a change in academic performance, social withdrawal, and anxiety and depression. Sexual violence engenders fear, and fear is the very opposite of the love that is the foundation of the Christian faith tradition.

Responding to human suffering and trauma

The experiences of survivors themselves are also a compelling argument for the involvement of faithful people in ending sexual violence. It is the Christian community’s mission and ministry to end human suffering and trauma, to bring healing to the world, and to bind up the wounds of those who are broken in mind, body, or spirit. Those who have suffered the trauma of sexual violence need support, spiritual care, and guidance as they walk the difficult journey toward justice and healing. Along the way, they are asking questions like these.

- “I’ve never heard anyone talk about this before. Am I the only one this ever happened to?”
- “Where can I find hope in this anguish?”
- “Why did this happen to me?”
- “Am I being punished?”
- “Is this part of God’s plan for my life?”
- “Am I supposed to just forgive and forget?”
- “Does this mean my promise to save sexual intimacy for marriage is broken? Am I now morally filthy and corrupt? A failure? A sinner?”

These questions point to the unique and critically important leadership that faith-based campus administrators can provide in spiritual care and healing for survivors of sexual violence. Faithful people and the wider community desperately need this moral authority and guidance in order to respond effectively to survivors

4 “The opposite of love isn’t hate. . . . It’s fear.” Mary Karr, American poet.
and end sexual and other forms of violence. The message from faith-based campuses can and should be: all human beings are of sacred worth and deserve our support, respect, and care.

We hope that this resource will help you continue a conversation that will lead to healing, justice, and peace for victims and survivors of sexual violence on faith-based campuses across America. Thank you for your past and present work to keep students and campuses safe and for your ongoing commitment to championing faith-based values that challenge sexual violence.

**Centering lived experiences**

*A first-hand account of a faith-based campus sexual violence survivor*⁵

I was 19 the first time I was sexually assaulted. Having grown up in a very Catholic family, sexual violence is not something you talked about. Not with the nuns that ran my Catholic school education, nor with my mother or older sister, where sex was such a taboo topic that we would change the television channel any time the topic came up. After all, why would we discuss sexual assault if sex outside of marriage isn’t something that happens in our community? Well, let me tell you a story about how sexual assault does in fact occur and being raised in a religious community does not absolve you from its occurrence.

Like most university students, I was excited to begin my journey into adulthood. Being the responsible and regimented person I am, I always studied hard and graduated with near perfect grades. I also am sociable. As such, I would go to social events with my friends.

At one such event, I was having a great time with my best friend. We were always careful to keep an eye on each other; we practiced the buddy system even for going to the bathroom. On this night, however, “Lucifer” managed to separate me from my friend and feed me an excessive amount of some type of substance – alcohol maybe – but like many elements of this story, I will never know for sure.

As a result, things got blurry and next thing I know, I am somehow in Lucifer’s apartment. I distinctly remember repeating “no” over and over and over. This didn’t stop Lucifer from using my body as if it were an object. Violating it. Violating me. As I was in a foggy state from whatever substance he kept feeding me, it was difficult to get away. My body felt heavy and I couldn’t move. My ears filled with a strange buzzing sound, like I was in outer space and from far away I heard “no, no, no . . . .”

I eventually crawled away from Lucifer on my hands and knees and passed out. In the morning I woke up and ran as quickly as I could out of the apartment. What came next, I don’t quite know how to describe. I was standing outside a building I normally passed at least

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⁵ For the protection of the survivor’s privacy and safety, we have intentionally omitted her name and the name of the university she attended.
two or three times every day, and yet I had no idea where I was. I had to call my best friend to come find me. I was a two-minute walk away from my apartment, but nothing looked familiar.

Following that morning where nothing was familiar, I chose to pretend nothing happened. After all, sexual violence couldn’t possibly happen; it didn’t exist in my community. As it was never spoken about, I didn’t have the words, let alone the framework, to even fathom what happened.

As a result, I never received help from my university about the issue. I didn’t even disclose what happened to anyone until weeks later when I found out Lucifer had taken a photo and video of the assault. At this point, it was more difficult for my brain to pretend nothing happened. I remember losing all feeling in my arms, legs, and body. I fell to the ground and couldn’t figure out what was happening. My lungs were fire and I couldn’t get any oxygen in my body.

From this point on, daily panic attacks were a part of my life. I learned that when I couldn’t breathe nor feel my arms and legs, it was just my body’s way of coping with something beyond my own ability to cope. Even when these panic attacks weren’t occurring (the body can only panic for 15 minutes at a time), I heard over and over in my head the only phrases I had heard from my community. “You wanted it. You’re a whore. You are gross. This wouldn’t have happened if you were a better Catholic. You deserve it.” And on and on and on. In fact, the first time I did disclose what happened to someone close to me, I heard a variation of these exact words.

The concept of virginity and purity had been drilled into my mind since I was a child, so all I could think was “I am no longer ‘pure.’” I was embarrassed and ashamed. The last thing I wanted was for more people to find out. Thus, it is no surprise that I never told my university or law enforcement about the sexual violence I endured.

A call to action for campus advocates and administrators

While we can’t go back in time to rectify my experience and my community’s silence and judgment, college leaders and administrators have the ability to change the outcome of this story for so many other students.

As an administrator at a faith-based university, you have the power to break the deafening silence and refute the harmful narratives of misused scripture, which cause undue harm to too many students. By educating students and faculty about what sexual violence is, where resources are on campus, and plainly stating that sexual violence is about violence and not sex, you are creating a culture on campus that allows students to feel safe to come forward for help. By letting students who have experienced sexual violence know that you support them, you are making the first step toward justice and healing possible.
Facts about sexual violence on campus

Sexual violence on campus is common: 13% of all students (graduate and undergraduate) experience a rape or sexual assault by a perpetrator who used violence, physical force, or incapacitation. Among undergraduates, 26.4% of female students and 6.7% of male students experience a rape or sexual assault. Of the female survivors, only about 1 in 5 received assistance from a victim services agency, and only 20% reported to law enforcement.

Those who perpetrate sexual assault usually attack someone they know – a friend, date, classmate, neighbor, coworker, or relative. Of adult victims, 73% knew the attacker, 38% were friends of the attacker, 28% were in an intimate relationship with the attacker, and 7% were a relative of the attacker. The survivor knew the person who sexually assaulted them in 8 out of 10 rape cases.

About 50% of sexual assaults take place in the victim’s own home. Another 20% occur in the home of a friend, neighbor, or relative.

While most perpetrators of sexual violence are men, most men are not perpetrators. However, statistics from the National Sexual Violence Resource Center show those who do perpetrate sexual violence usually have multiple victims. They are also more likely to commit other forms of interpersonal violence; 63.3% of men at one university who self-reported acts qualifying as rape or attempted rape admitted to committing repeat rapes.

Perpetrators of sexual violence often avoid extreme physical force during the assault in order to make it easier for them to deny the rape in its aftermath. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC) states: “Instead of using weapons . . . or extreme physical force or violence, most undetected rapists premeditate their attacks, identify and isolate victims, and deliberately use only as much force as necessary, such as psychological weapons [threats, manipulation, manipulation].

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6 This statistic is from RAINN (the Rape and Incest National Network) and can be accessed at [https://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence](https://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence).
7 Cantor, David, Fisher, Bonnie, Chibnall, Susan, Townsend, Reanna, et. al. Association of American Universities (AAU). Report on the AAU Campus Climate Survey on Sexual Assault and Sexual Misconduct. (January 17, 2020). Reported by RAINN (the Rape and Incest National Network), which recommends using the citations to review sources for more information and detail.
8 Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Rape and Sexual Victimization among College-Aged Females, 1995-2013 (2014).
coercion, intimidation, fear, and guilt] and alcohol [or other drugs].”\(^{13}\)

Whether weapons are used or not, most victims fear for their lives during an assault, especially if the attacker is larger and more powerful. This means that victims may or may not be physically injured during an assault. The lack of physical injury does not mean that someone has not been assaulted.

Sexual violence is NOT about sex. Sexual violence is “a crime not typically motivated by sexual desire but by the desire to control, humiliate, and/or harm.”\(^{14}\)

*Sexual assault is NEVER the victim or survivor’s fault.*

**Breaking the silence with healing, justice, and peace**

While it can be difficult to talk about sexual violence, faithful people are already talking about healing, justice, and peace, which are all critical to victims and survivors of sexual violence.

In the aftermath of sexual violence, survivors can find healing if they can talk about what happened, find support and safety on their campuses and in their communities, receive referrals to sexual violence services, connect to their spiritual resources, and feel empowered to move forward with their lives.

Many survivors will have spiritual questions or crises. They may wonder whether to report the crime or confront the perpetrator. They may feel unclean or unworthy. Many faith-based survivors have reported that they felt impure after the sexual assault, like their virginity was stolen from them. This compounded the pain of the assault because their personal value had been strongly affiliated with their physical virginity. Faith-based questions about sin, impurity, virginity, and faith can only be answered by faith leaders who stand in solidarity with the survivor and understand the need for pastoral care that promotes healing, empowerment, and wellbeing. One critical element of compassionate spiritual care for survivors of abuse is that the burden of sin, shame, and guilt that they carry is lifted from their shoulders and placed where it belongs: on the shoulders of the perpetrator.

Survivors can find **justice** when they are believed and not blamed, when they have the support they need to overcome the fear, trauma, and shame, and when perpetrators are held accountable. Many victims feel pressured to forgive, but forgiveness without accountability is hollow and certainly does not lead to justice. Faith leaders and faith-based campus administrators have a unique role to play in supporting survivors, allowing them to forgive or move

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\(^{13}\) Boston Area Rape Crisis Center, Sexual Violence Statistics, [https://www.barcc.org/information/facts/stats](https://www.barcc.org/information/facts/stats).

\(^{14}\) National Sexual Violence Resource Center, « Fact Sheet: Impact of Sexual Violence.» See [https://nsvrc.org](https://nsvrc.org) for additional details.
on in their own time, prioritizing accountability for perpetrators, and promoting justice for survivors of sexual violence. Most of all, survivors need to feel that their faith leaders and college administrators stand with them.

And survivors can find peace if their community creates a safe culture on campus and in the community. Administrators of faith-based campuses have a unique role to play in breaking the silence, raising awareness about and strongly condemning sexual violence, promoting safety, building partnerships on the campus and beyond that provide services for survivors, and providing spiritual resources that promote wholeness, peace, and wellbeing for survivors.

Survivors need their faith community’s support to find healing, justice, and peace. On our campuses and in our communities, we need to talk about sexual violence. To start the conversation, let’s look at some facts.

**So, what Is sexual violence?**

Sexual violence is first and foremost violence. It is a crime that misuses human sexuality in order to control, humiliate, and harm. Sexual violence occurs whenever a person is forced, coerced, and/or manipulated into any unwanted sexual activity. Sexual violence includes rape, incest, child sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and unwanted sexual contact or touching.

At the heart of sexual violence is lack of consent. The victim has not agreed to or consented to participate in what is happening.

Consent is possible only when someone freely and verbally agrees to something. A person’s consent can be conditional (they agree to x but not y) and is revocable (they can change their mind at any time with no reason needed). Also, consent in one situation does not imply consent in any other and consent at one time does not imply consent at other times. Individuals may be unable to consent due to age, illness, disability, religious strictures, or the influence of alcohol or other drugs.

Sexual violence violates a person’s humanity and dignity and destroys their trust and feeling of safety on the most profound level. It affects not only survivors but also their loved ones, campuses, and communities. Sexual violence causes profound trauma that requires healing on all levels: physical, emotional, and spiritual.

Unfortunately, even within faith communities and on faith-based campuses, the sacred bonds of human relationship can be broken when someone perpetrates sexual violence. Faith-based campus administrators and leaders may then be faced with the dilemma of responding to the needs of both the victim and the perpetrator.
Sexual violence can and does happen to people of all genders, ages, races, religions, incomes, abilities, professions, ethnicities, and sexual orientations. Social inequalities can heighten the risk. College women are at three times the risk of sexual violence as women in the general population.\textsuperscript{15}

Religious leaders may also perpetrate sexual violence. This is a violation of sacred trust and an abuse of religious power and authority. The harm done to the survivor is compounded by the religious leader’s power, authority, and standing in the community. Many faith communities have developed ethical guidelines for religious leaders that condemn such misuse of religious power and authority.\textsuperscript{16}

Given that most perpetrators of sexual violence are men, (90 percent of perpetrators of sexual violence against women are men\textsuperscript{17}) it is important that men and boys uphold their sacred responsibility to treat everyone with respect and dignity. Men and boys should never objectify others, force themselves on others, or humiliate, harm, or instill fear in others. Students must be taught about ethical guidelines and right relationship, and perpetrators must be held accountable. The students’ ability to treat others with dignity and respect is foundational to their religious formation.

While most undergraduates are not married, graduate students, faculty, and staff on campus may be married. It is important to recognize that even within marriage it is illegal and wrong for one partner to sexually force themselves on the other. Although many faith traditions encourage marital partners to meet each other’s needs, being married does not mean that someone is obligated to consent to sex at any time and in any situation. Sometimes, sexual violence may occur within the context of a marriage as part of a wider pattern of power, control, and abuse. Marital rape is a crime in the United States.

Christians recognize that all people are beloved children of God, and not one of us deserves to be violated or assaulted. No one deserves to have their own sexuality used violently against them as a weapon to harm, humiliate, and shame. We all deserve to live “free from threats, intimidation, force, pressure, or abuse of power or authority.”\textsuperscript{18}

For this reason, it is helpful for faith-based campus administrators and leaders on Christian campuses to promulgate a clear and unequivocal message: there is no excuse for sexual violence. Sexual violence is never acceptable. No one deserves sexual violence.

\textsuperscript{15}This statistic is from RAINN (the Rape and Incest National Network) and can be accessed at https://rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence.

\textsuperscript{16}For more information on sexual violence perpetrated by a faith leaders, see Marie Fortune, Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin. Pilgrim Press. 1988. Also see FaithTrust Institute’s Clergy Abuse Bibliography: https://faithtrustinstitute.org/resources/bibliographies/clergy-sexual-abuse.

\textsuperscript{17}This statistic is from the CDC (National Intimate Partner Sexual Violence Survey) and can be accessed at https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

\textsuperscript{18}National Sexual Violence Resource Center, « Fact Sheet : Impact of Sexual Violence.» See https://navrc.org for additional information.
The actions of a perpetrator of sexual violence should never be condoned, and the survivor should never be blamed for the crime.

All victims of sexual violence deserve to be heard and supported as they seek safety, justice, and healing. As Maya Angelou (herself a survivor of sexual violence) said, “There is no agony like bearing an untold story inside of you.” College administrators at faith-based universities, in coordination with faith leaders and sexual violence advocates, have an important and unique role to play in making sure that survivors of sexual violence are heard with compassion and empowered to find the safety, justice, and healing they deserve.

_There are survivors of sexual violence on our campus; how can I ensure my campus is effectively supporting them?_

Anyone on campus could be called upon to help, so we all need to know how to provide compassionate support. While each campus is different and your campus may have already developed protocols for response, these general guidelines may also be helpful.

- Be proactive and involved in your campus' efforts to end sexual violence.
- Respond to the needs of marginalized students. Ensure your responses are trauma-informed and culturally responsive.
- Address language access, and other supports and accommodations students may need to decrease barriers to supportive services.
- If you are an OVW Campus Project Grantee, contact your OVW Program Manager, coordinated community response team (CCRT) related to the campus violence prevention OVW project, and campus faith leaders and any other entity on or off campus to access the variety of resources to ensure you are informed about the prevention and intervention of sexual violence.
- If you are not an OVW Campus Project Grantee, connect with campus faith leaders, and any other entity on or off campus to access the variety of resources to ensure you are informed about the prevention and intervention of sexual violence.
- Build relationships with your local victim services organization that support survivors of sexual violence.
- Confirm there is a standardized procedure across campus for how to respond to sexual violence, taking into account that all federal laws and regulations, such as the Clery Act and Title IX, are followed. Work with your OVW Program Manager to develop or strengthen necessary procedures.
- Know your campus’ laws and policies on mandated reporting.

• Verify that all campus responses to sexual violence survivors are calm, compassionate, culturally responsive, and nonjudgmental. As a faith-based college or university, you have a unique opportunity to help faith-affiliated survivors talk about their faith and the abuse they have suffered. Survivors may be angry, confused, or feel betrayed. Listen to and honor their questions; you do not have to know all the answers. If appropriate, assure the survivor of your support and of the survivor’s own strength and courage. Be a supportive presence. Provide hope, spiritual care, and resources.²⁰

• Verify that there are resources on campus to support survivors during their trauma and throughout their recovery and/or the prosecution of their case. Offer both tangible support and spiritual resources. Reassure them that they can regain control of their life.

• Take care of yourself. Talking about sexual violence, supporting survivors, and doing something to make your campus’ response more effective takes spiritual strength, determination, and courage! Stay connected to your resources, traditions, and spiritual disciplines.

If a sexual assault has recently occurred and you have direct contact with the victim, you can consider any of the following possible ways to support them. If you do not have direct contact with the victim, have protocols in place so that other campus faculty and staff who may have contact respond in the following ways.

• Believe the survivor. Many survivors fear that no one will believe them or that their experiences will be trivialized.

• Build trust and transparency with students by letting them know about any reporting requirements you may have and how you can be helpful to them.

• Assure the survivor of confidentiality unless:
  o what they disclose involves a situation that you are mandated to report (take special note of the Clery Act and Title IX and if sexual or physical violence has been perpetrated against a child, an older adult, or an adult with disabilities), OR
  o they suggest they might harm themselves or someone else.

• Encourage survivors to get to a safe place and to prioritize their own safety.

• Reassure survivors that they are not alone and not to blame – anyone can be a victim of sexual violence.

• Encourage survivors to make decisions for themselves, and honor those decisions.

²⁰ Material in this section quoted and/or adapted with permission and with many thanks from the Georgia Network to End Sexual Assault (GNESA), “Practical Recommendations for the Church’s Response to Sexual Assault.” For more information, please contact GNESA at 866-354-3672 or see https://www.gnesa.org.
• Use helpful phrases such as “how can I help?” or “I’m here to listen.” Do not blame the victim.

• Do not press for unnecessary details. Allow survivors to tell the story in their own words. Avoid unhelpful questions or suggestions that, even when well-intentioned, implicitly blame victims, such as:
  o what were you wearing?
  o had you been drinking?
  o did you invite them back to your place?
  o did you fight back?
  o did you call for help?
  o did you say no?
  o why didn’t you . . . ?

• Encourage survivors to consider seeking medical help. Learn more now from your OVW Program Manager (if you are a grantee) and/or local sexual assault service providers about what is involved in a sexual assault exam and about the sexual assault resources and services available in your community. For example, your community may have a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (or “SANE” Nurse) who has been specially trained to support the victim compassionately and confidentially while also gathering evidence of the crime. You may also have sexual assault advocates who have experience accompanying sexual violence survivors to medical exams and other services.

• While most victims of sexual violence feel like they want to shower and change clothes immediately, it’s important to weigh that against the victim’s desire to collect medical evidence or seek medical treatment. Every victim should be encouraged to make their own decision about whether to seek medical help or a forensic exam to gather evidence. If a victim chooses to have an exam, it is recommended that they do not shower, douche, change clothes, eat, drink, or smoke before the exam.

• Offer to accompany survivors to places such as the hospital, police station, and local sexual violence services. Help survivors connect with local advocates who are trained to support survivors and/or help them identify someone they trust to accompany them.

• Ensure enough time and a safe, private place to talk. Listen from your heart with compassion.
How can my faith-based campus prepare to support victims and survivors?

Even before someone reaches out for help, you can act now to make your campus a safe haven.

College campuses are complex entities, and no one person can respond to victims and survivors of sexual violence alone. That is why supporting and becoming more involved with the work of the OVW Program Manager is so important. Build partnerships with your local sexual violence services agency to respond to individual survivors, to address prevention, and to tackle the larger societal issues, such as racism, sexism, ageism, or homophobia, which can be used to justify sexual violence. The list below will give you some ideas.

- Ask advocates and/or your OVW Program Manager to provide training to as many university students, faculty, and staff as possible. Because survivors of sexual violence may disclose to anyone on the campus, the more people who are trained, the better chance a victim has to receive effective support.
- Ensure that your campus’ basic safety measures include the concerns of victims and survivors of sexual violence.
- Support and encourage events that break the silence and raise awareness, such as a speaker, film screening and discussion, a vigil, or a book group. For example, you could invite your campus OVW Program Manager and/or local advocates to speak to students about what consent and sexual assault are and how the campus is dedicated to ending sexual violence.
- Place flyers or posters about local and campus services in hallways, bathrooms, and classrooms, on websites, and in social media.
- Join your campus’ Coordinated Community Response Team (CCRT)! Get to know the advocates and build a list of trusted resources and referrals for crisis response and long-term healing.
- Encourage your campus faith leaders to include prayers for those who have been sexually assaulted or abused during services and campus events and to incorporate supportive messages in sermons and testimonies.
- Sexual violence traumatizes victims. New research about trauma and its long-term effects is being published all the time. Learn more about trauma and how to respond. Encourage your campus faith leaders to identify traditions, scriptures, and spiritual practices that can support healing and recovery.

If you are interested in receiving technical assistance or would like further information, email campus@esperanzaunited.org