

# IDEAS FOR ORGANIZING ON CAMPUS

Campus Toolkit for Combatting Sexual Violence

## CONTEXTUALIZING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: POWER, PRIVILEGE & PATRIARCHY

Students' unions across the province and the Canadian Federation of Students-Ontario have long advocated for the need to address the systemic issues that lead to violence and oppression on our campuses and in our communities. This Campus Toolkit for Combatting Sexual Violence is part of an ongoing process to end sexual and gender-based violence on campus, complementing the No Means No anti-rape campaign and ongoing campus-based work at students' unions and gender resource centres.

Although women can be and are perpetrators of sexual violence, men are disproportionately the instigators and perpetrators of sexual assault and violence, most often against women. This reality can be understood in the context of the system of patriarchy, who is privileged within that system and the power that is used to create a culture of acceptance when it comes to violence and assault against women on campus and in society.

The following are broad and limited descriptions of important concepts to consider when working on issues of sexism, misogyny, sexual violence and gender-based violence and oppression. These should be considered a starting point, as it is important to recognize that people are experts in their own experiences and there are several organizations and groups of people doing this work every day.

### WHAT IS PATRIARCHY?

Patriarchy is a system in our society that gives men access to privileges over women. This system is integrated into all areas of our lives – social, economic, ideological, cultural, political and spiritual. The ways in which gendered-based violence is responded to and dealt with stem from both individual actions and systemic institutions that teach us that masculinity is dominant and superior.

We see this system at work in very clear ways in the context of sexual and gender-based violence. Survivors of sexual violence are often blamed for their experiences of violence and instructed to prevent or avoid this violence, as opposed to institutions focusing on promoting consent, sending a strong message that sexual and gender-based violence is not tolerated and centring the need to address systemic oppression in responses to violence.

### WHAT IS PRIVILEGE?

Privilege is an unearned advantaged afforded to a group because they are the dominant element in a society. In our current social context, men have access to a number of social, economic and political advantages for being men. The ability of men to access these advantages is also impacted by other experiences of privilege or marginalization based on racism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and other forms of oppression.

Male privilege may lead men to ignore or be unable to recognize the realities and impacts of sexual and gender-based violence on campus because it is less likely to impact them. An important component of privilege is that people who have privilege are taught that it does not exist and as a result people with male privilege must work to unlearn their ideas about safety, sexual violence and gender-based violence when working on these issues.

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## **SO THEN WHAT IS POWER AND HOW DOES IT RELATE TO SEXUAL VIOLENCE?**

When a group of people has privilege (e.g. men in our society) they usually hold significant power over the way society operates, individual social interactions and other important areas.

In the case of sexual and gender-based violence, the system of patriarchy not only leads individual men to believe that they have a right to access women's bodies without consent, but also creates and maintain institutions that promote and condone sexual violence. For example, ideas that individuals might have that blame women for people assaulted are connected to the way the legal system deals with prosecuting and addressing criminal cases related to sexual and gender-based violence.

## **ONGOING PROCESS**

Defining and identifying systemic causes of violence on our campuses is an ongoing process. Everyone working on these issues must work to continue to challenge ourselves and continue to deepen our understanding of these complex issues.

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## SEXUAL HEALTH MATERIALS IN FROSH/ ORIENTATION KITS & AT THE STUDENTS' UNION OFFICE

Providing free condoms is an important way to promote consent and safer sex on campus. There is a lot of stigma around sex that may make some students feel uncomfortable purchasing condoms. By including them in frosh kits and having them in open spaces around your building or office, you are creating an inclusive space that promotes safer and healthier sex. There are several non-profits and health clinics around the province that are more than happy to provide free condoms if your budget is limited.

## LITERATURE ON CONSENT/SEXUAL ASSAULT IN FROSH/ ORIENTATION KITS

Back to school is an important time for all students and the students' union because students are open to learning and experiencing new things and information. Including literature, even if it's a small leaflet or button, in frosh/ orientation kits at the beginning of the year is a great way

## TABLE WITH LITERATURE/SWAG THAT PROMOTES CONSENT & EDUCATES ON SEXUAL ASSAULT

Use that same literature to set up tabling and outreach throughout the year. Keeping the information present and public in different locations on campus at different times ensures that the information is accessible to as many students as possible, and efforts to educate the community are ongoing.

## WORKSHOPS ON CONSENT THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

There are several different kinds of workshops and seminars that can be hosted about consent and safer sex. Whether it's an introduction to consent workshop teaching students about what consent means, or a basic safer sex workshop which would include tips about protection and hygiene, education is an important aspect of sex positivity and violence prevention.

## OPEN ANTI-O AND EQUITY TRAINING FOR ALL STUDENTS

Hosting open anti-oppression and equity training for all students is important as it creates inclusive spaces for dialogue about respect and safer space. These spaces create opportunity to discuss the stereotypes surrounding sexual assault, what it means, and where and how it happens. Including definitions, resources and ways to support survivors is an important part of these trainings.

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### POSTERS ABOUT CONSENT/SEXUAL ASSAULT IN RESIDENCE

Posters are a great tool for promotion and education. Consider creating posters with facts and information about sexual assault or consent and posting them on campus and in residences. You can also post No Means No posters that have been created by the CFS – available for download at [cfs-fcee.ca](http://cfs-fcee.ca).

### COLLABORATE WITH YOUR RESIDENCE ASSOCIATION

If you're going to host workshops and seminars on consent, think about partnering with your residence association or residence staff to host some of them in residence. A high number of campus sexual assaults occur in residences.

### CONSENT IS SEXY AND/OR NO MEANS NO WEEK OF ACTIVITY

Many campuses run Consent is Sexy or No Means No weeks which typically is a series of events and workshops focused on these topics. Examples of programming include movie screenings, sex Q&As, panel and circle discussions, inclusive sex-related comedy events, craft and art-related workshops, among many other things.

### INCORPORATE EDUCATION INTO CURRENT EVENTS AND ORGANIZING

Once you have material created and a campaign developed, it's fairly easy to incorporate this work into other work the students' union does. For example, you could have a consent is sexy table at all events of the students' union in order to perpetuate the idea that consent and sexual assault education is important in every discussion of campus life.

### TRAINING AND PROMOTIONS IN BAR

Many students' unions have a bar and run programming out of it. This is an excellent opportunity to request and host training for the staff that works at the bar. Whether it's equity training or training specific to sexual assault prevention, resolution and support; ensuring that your bar staff are prepared and understand an environment promoting consent and sexual assault prevention is important. You can also use your bar as a space to have materials promoting consent such as coasters for drinks and small flyers to go with menus. Reintroducing the idea of consent and respect in multiple different environments supports ongoing efforts of inclusive and safer spaces.

### COALITION MEETINGS

Host a coalition meeting with interested students, faculty and staff on campus to help plan events, develop material and strategies around violence prevention and consent promotion. Including students and other community members in the process of developing strategies and campaigns is an important way to make sure the community takes responsibility for creating safer spaces.

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Coalition meetings and open organizing spaces are important opportunities to collect feedback from the campus community. Opening up space and encouraging dialogue and suggestions enables students' unions to effectively communicate students' needs to administration and influence institutional policies. Especially in the instances of assault or violence occurring on campus, holding meetings and striking working groups allows survivors and allies to take ownership over responding to the public and media and taking action, and encourages a collective process to determine next steps.

## STUDENT-LED PEER SUPPORT PROGRAMS

There are various student-led programs at most institutions across the province. Examples of peer support programs include sexual assault survivor support lines, survivor-ally connect programs that can involve in-person and confidential drop-in hours, walk-home buddy programs and online survivor support initiatives. There are several important considerations when starting or running any of these programs. Including:

**Leadership burnout:** Survivor support and assault prevention can be emotionally and mentally taxing, especially when student-led because many students are also balancing other responsibilities.

**Irregular attendance or low engagement:** With any student initiative, low engagement of volunteers is common as students have many competing priorities. Low engagement in a peer support program can threaten the existence and efficiency of the program.

**Inclusive and welcoming to all:** When running programs that are sensitive in nature and that need to be effective for survivors, ensuring inclusiveness is important and can be difficult. Considerations of what kind of support, how it is promoted, who is giving support, and who can access services need to be made.

Many students' unions and institutions have student-led programs that focus on peer support initiatives. Contact other students' union or the Canadian Federation of

Students - Ontario office for advice and help on starting or expanding your own.

## INFLUENCING INSTITUTIONAL STUDENT SUPPORT

It is important to have regular meetings with administration or relevant departments to influence and inform how the college or university provides student support. There are several simple ways that institutions can provide support to students and survivors; including: providing a list of resources on campus and in the campus community, offering referral services through existing counseling departments, and encouraging survivors to engage with peer support initiatives and programs on campus.

Students' unions should be included and involved in the administration's decision with what supports to offer and how to promote campus and off-campus services.

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### IMPORTANT DATES TO ORGANIZE AROUND

The following are some generally recognized dates to consider organizing around and doing events/education in relation to violence prevention and/or consent promotion.

February 12 – Canadian Sexual and Reproductive Health Day

March 4 – World Day of the Fight Against Sexual Exploitation

Week of March 8 – International Women’s Week

March 8 – International Women’s Day

Week of March 21 – Week of Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling against Racism and Racial Discrimination

March 21 – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

April 3 - International Day Against Victim-Blaming

Third week of May – Aboriginal Awareness Week

May 17 - National Day Against Homophobia & Transphobia

May 24 – International Women’s Day for Peace and Disarmament

Third week of September – Take Back the Night Week

October 4 - Sisters in Spirit Vigils and Events

November 25 – International Day to End Violence Against Women

December 6 – National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women

### CAMPUS PARTNERS TO COLLABORATE WITH

A list of types of groups to consider collaborating with on violence prevention and consent promotion.

Womens Centres

Trans\* Centres

Pride & Queer Community Centres

Anti-racist groups & centres

Sexual Assault Survivor Support Groups & Centres

Unions

PIRGs

Planned Parenthood

AIDS/HIV Awareness Associations