

Advocacy group sets out sexual violence response guidelines for B.C. universities

Ending Violence B.C. releases guidelines in response to 'silent epidemic'

By Lien Yeung, [CBC News](#) Posted: Jun 16, 2016 12:47 PM PT Last Updated: Jun 16, 2016 12:47 PM PT

Ending Violence B.C. has released a [new set of guidelines](#) in hopes of helping post-secondary institutions tackle sexual assault reporting on campus.

The 10 guidelines which provide recommendations on appropriate protocol and confidentiality have been sent to all B.C. universities and colleges.

"I think historically we have had systems in place that weren't necessarily ready and trained ... we didn't have the confidence or competence to talk to women about what happened," said Tracy Porteous, the executive director of the advocacy group.

Her organization's report comes in the wake of an SFU student who allegedly sexually assaulted three women. Two men have been charged with similar crimes at UBC.

Post-secondary institutions have been under scrutiny for [not having sexual misconduct policies](#), an issue the provincial government recently tried to address by [tabling a bill](#) to require such policies.

Porteous hopes the changes will help survivors feel safe enough to report incidents of sexual violence.

"I've been working in the field for many, many years, I've never seen this much public interest, this much public dialogue about what really has been historically a silent epidemic," she said.

Dehumanizing experience

The first change Porteous wants to see is "institutional leadership" from university presidents to administrative staff when it comes to knowing an institution's sexual assault policy.

She wants every person who works with students to be trained and to know exactly what to do when someone discloses to them they have suffered sexual violence.

A pitfall she warns against is mandatory reporting — something she said she saw happen in Ontario where once a sexual assault was disclosed on campus, it had to then be shared throughout university administration regardless of the victim's desires.

"Because it is so dehumanizing and humiliating, the issues around confidentiality are paramount," said Porteous.

Instead, she says it's important to maximize the amount of choice a survivor has when it comes to disclosure, filing formal reports and accessing support.

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