

The Department of Relationship Violence & Outreach is one of several universities to be awarded the **OVW Fiscal Year 2010 Grants to Reduce Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, and Stalking on Campus Program** to support the existing curriculum being utilized by the department and university. We recognize that this is no small feat and encourage the campus community to familiarize themselves with not only the purpose of and need for this grant, but our overall plans for success, as well.

Why Does The Campus Grant Even Exist?

Sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking are serious problems on college and university campuses. Addressing these crimes on campuses raises unique issues and challenges that Congress sought to address by creating the Campus Program.

Unlike victims of violence against women in the larger community, students victimized by other students often face additional challenges in a “closed” campus environment. For example, a victim of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking may continue to live in danger if the perpetrator resides in the same dormitory or attends the same classes. On smaller campuses, a victim may wish to remain anonymous but may find this to be virtually impossible in such an insular environment. Similarly, stalking victims may find it difficult to escape their tormentors, because the stalker may have a seemingly “legitimate” reason for remaining in contact with or in proximity to the victim (e.g., studying in the library). The fear and anguish suffered by sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking victims may continue if they attend the same classes or live in the same dormitory as the perpetrator. In other cases, a victim may be harassed by classmates or by a perpetrator’s friends who claim that the victim “asked for it” or “provoked” the attack. Even changing class schedules or living arrangements may not eliminate the threat of encountering the perpetrator on campus.

Survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking from diverse communities frequently confront additional challenges when seeking assistance. Survivors with disabilities may struggle with obstacles,

such as shelters that cannot physically accommodate them. International students, or the spouses or partners of international students, may face linguistic or cultural barriers to obtaining services. Similarly, victims from racial, ethnic, or religious minority groups may fear discrimination when they attempt to obtain services.

While many institutions of higher education now assist victims in initiating criminal proceedings through local law enforcement agencies, historically these institutions have addressed sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking through closed administrative procedures or mediation. When colleges and universities choose to pursue the criminal justice approach over the administrative/mediation approach, they send an important and serious message to victims, perpetrators, and the entire campus community that these actions are criminal behavior.

How Does The Grant Impact The Campus of MSU?

The Campus Program supports activities that develop and strengthen victim services in cases involving sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking on campuses. The Campus Program also aims to strengthen security and investigative strategies to prevent and prosecute these crimes on campuses. Campuses are addressing these crimes by developing campus-based coordinated responses that include campus victim services, law enforcement, health providers, housing officials, administrators, student leaders, faith-based organizations, student organizations, and disciplinary boards. The Campus Program supports a coordinated community approach that enhances victim safety and assistance, and supports efforts to hold offenders accountable. To be effective, campus responses must be linked to local criminal justice agencies and service providers, including local law enforcement agencies, prosecutors' offices, courts, and nonprofit, nongovernmental victim advocacy and victim services agencies.

What are the Goals of the Grant?

Over the course of the three-year grant, the overall goals to be carried out are to develop and implement campus policies, protocols, and services that more

effectively identify and respond to the crimes of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking by:

- Creating a **Coordinated Community Response Team** to violence against women on campus;
- Establishing a mandatory prevention and education program** about sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking **for all incoming freshmen**;
- Training campus police** to respond effectively in domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking cases;
- Establishing or strengthen programs to **train members of campus disciplinary boards** to respond effectively to charges of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking.

The Department of Relationship Violence & Outreach endeavors to utilize all tools and resources available to significantly decrease instances of violence and educate the campus community. More information on this and other initiatives can be obtained by contacting the department at 662-325-2090.