

# Report on Preventing Sexual Violence at the University of Ottawa

May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020



## BACKGROUND

The Standing Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Violence (SCPSV) and the Human Rights Office (HRO) jointly present this report on activities taking place from May 1, 2019 to April 30, 2020.

The SCPSV was formed in 2016. Its mandate includes: a) to work in collaboration with the University community to foster a safe learning environment; and b) to recommend relevant initiatives, strategies, or programs that ensure and improve the continuity of services, policies, processes and other prevention measures.

For its part, the HRO is responsible for responding to disclosures and complaints of sexual violence that concern members of the University community. The HRO offers a range of services to survivors in addition to information on the options and processes that apply under the relevant policies. Finally, the HRO implements prevention, awareness, and educational initiatives.

Over the past year, the SCPSV and the HRO have worked together to pursue the fight against sexual violence at the University of Ottawa. This report is divided into three sections.

### Section I – Overview

The report will first present an overview of initiatives implemented to raise awareness of sexual violence within the University community, inform the community of the services offered, and prevent incidents of sexual violence on campus.

### Section II – Data

This section will present data on disclosures, complaints lodged, and the accommodation measures put in place to support members of the student community affected by sexual violence on campus. It will also discuss a review of the effectiveness of *Policy 67b – Prevention of Sexual Violence*, which was conducted during the period covered by this report.

### Section III – Recommendations

As mandated, the members of the SCPSV have formulated recommendations, which also led them to implement a variety of initiatives over the past year. A list of these suggestions concludes the report.

## PREVENTION, AWARENESS AND EDUCATION

In collaboration with several partners, both on and off campus, the HRO organized and/or participated in various prevention, awareness, and educational events. The HRO also participated in various committees.

### **KEY PARTNERS**

- University of Ottawa Students' Union (UOSU)
- Women's Resource Centre
- Graduate Students Association of the University of Ottawa (GSAÉD)
- Student Life
- Housing Service
- Aboriginal Resource Centre
- Communications Directorate
- International Office
- Health Promotion Services
- Food Services
- Protection Services
- CALACS francophone d'Ottawa
- Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre (ORCC)
- The Ottawa Coalition to End Violence Against Women (OCTEVAW)
- Carleton University
- Algonquin College
- La Cité

## AWARENESS AND PREVENTION

### **Six Weeks of Sexual Violence Prevention on Campus**

- Sexual Violence Prevention Day
- #JustGotWeird Campaign
- #IBelieveYou Day
- Peer Help Group
- Take Back the Night
- Let's Talk About Sex with Venus Envy
- Consent and Inclusive Yoga
- Panda game
- Sisters in Spirit vigil

### **International meet-and-greet**

- Do you NO the limit? — 360° of consent

### **Sixteen days of activism against gender-based violence**

- A Way with Images and Words: A Survivor's Journey
- Conference on Human Trafficking
- Participation in the national vigil to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Polytechnique massacre. The University of Ottawa was invited to participate by the University of Montreal, which organized the event.

### **Wellness Week**

- Workshop: Supporting our friends in the time of #MeToo, presented by OCTEVAW

### **Information booths and other campus events**

- Escape the UCU
- Social Justice Fair
- Information booth –101 Week
- Fauteux 101
- Wellness Café
- Welcome Week

You can find further details about these activities under **Events** on the [Sexual violence: support and prevention website](#).

## **EDUCATION**

### ***Mobilizing the Bystanders workshop***

Over the summer of 2019, the HRO conducted a complete review of the training offered, based on participant and trainer feedback. Consequently, the HRO added information to the sections on 1) intersectionality 2) the bystander effect 3) myths 4) the survivor-centred approach, and 5) consent. The HRO also updated certain information, most notably in response to revisions to *Policy 67b — Prevention of Sexual Violence*.

Finally, over the course of the past year, the HRO and various internal services held several workshops. The HRO also offered train-the-trainer workshops to increase the number of people who, in turn, can provide training.

### **Other training sessions**

- Training on sexual violence prevention and on employee and manager obligations, offered to Human Resources
- Training on sexual violence prevention, offered to Food Services
- Training on sexual violence prevention, offered to the Health Promotion Service's mobile sexual health team

- Series of training workshops, including on sexual violence prevention, given to new international students
- Training that includes a component on sexual violence, offered to Housing Service
- Training offered to review committees, as specified in *Policy 67b — Prevention of Sexual Violence*

## COMMITTEES

### Communities of Practice – Courage to Act

In addition to being a member of the SCPSV, the HRO's sexual violence prevention officer sits on the Francophone practice committee of [Courage to Act](#), a national initiative that aims to address and prevent gender-based violence on Canadian post-secondary campuses. This participation will certainly provide the University with new tools to combat sexual violence on our campus.

### Standing Committee on Student Wellbeing

The director of the Human Rights Office also sits on the University of Ottawa's Standing Committee on Student Wellbeing, which strengthens the HRO's ties with its other partners on campus, allowing them to work together to meet the wellness needs of the student population. This also gives the HRO an opportunity to share important information on, and discuss issues related to, the prevention of sexual violence on campus.

## DISCLOSURES, COMPLAINTS, AND ACCOMMODATIONS

Between May 1, 2019 and April 30, 2020, students submitted a total of 112 sexual violence-related requests for services to the HRO. This total includes 86 consultations (follow-up on cases opened in previous years, requests for accommodations, disclosures, etc.), 17 requests for information (referrals to internal or external services, information on *Policy 67b*, services, or the complaint process), and 9 cases that resulted in formal complaints.

Of these requests for services from students, the HRO received 75 new disclosures from students, which can be classified as the following types of sexual violence:

**Sexual assault:** 28

**Sexual harassment:** 30

**Criminal harassment:** 8

**Indecent exposure:** 3

**Sexual exploitation:** 1

**Other** (other types or incidents that survivors preferred not to specify): 5

During the period covered by this report, the HRO assisted students in requests for accommodations 98 times. Such accommodations included: postponing assignment deadlines or exams; switching courses; applying preventive measures in class; letters of support in various appeals; requests for tuition fee reimbursement; and justifications for absences from class.

Finally, of the nine complaints received, three resulted in external investigations, five were resolved through informal or alternative measures, and one was dropped.



## EFFECTIVENESS OF POLICY 67B – PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

During 2019, the HRO and members of the SCPSV consulted each other to review Policy 67b. In light of this review, they made several changes and a few clarifications were suggested to make certain sections more explicit.

Through this review, which was presented to and approved by the various internal levels of authority, reviewers determined that more substantial changes were required. For example, they recommended a review of the complaint procedure to update and possibly simplify it. The HRO is currently working on an in-depth review, and a broader consultation will be undertaken to gather comments from the University community. This will allow the University to implement a policy that will best meet the needs of its community.

## RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE PREVENTION OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

During the period covered by this report, the SCPSV met several times; they discussed and recommended various initiatives. The members collaborated with the HRO on the implementation of these projects.

### **Creation of a new position to support the prevention of sexual violence**

Since the data gathered has shown a significant increase in the number of disclosures and in requests for HRO services, the SCPSV recommended that the HRO create an additional position to assist in addressing sexual violence prevention. The incumbent would take charge of prevention, educational, and awareness activities, among other duties, within the HRO.

To this effect, the HRO is pleased to confirm that this position will be added and that the team will now comprise two full-time officers, in permanent positions, to meet the needs of the University community.

### **Online disclosure form**

The members of the SCPSV, as well as other partners on campus, raised the point that survivors may find it difficult to access services to disclose, or to obtain support in, circumstances involving sexual violence. Certain barriers to disclosure are always present, such as the fear of not being believed or the embarrassment of disclosing an incident to a stranger. To remedy this situation, an online disclosure form, which University community members could use to contact the HRO, was proposed.

This form, which is the product of collaboration between the HRO and the SCPSV, is now available on the [Sexual Violence: Prevention and Support](#) webpage, under the **Disclose/Report an Incident** tab. Now, a person can complete the form to contact the HRO and thus access the complete range of services offered. The form is confidential and can be completed anonymously.

### **Data collection**

One of the SCPSV recommendations is to collect data on disclosed incidents of sexual violence. The importance of gathering campus-wide statistics was raised and the creation of a data collection form was proposed. This form would be completed by the faculties, as well as several services and departments.

In collaboration with the SCPSV, the HRO created a data collection form that was sent to certain services, departments, as well as the faculties. This data gathering will allow us to better grasp the scope of the problem of sexual violence on campus and to work with the various sectors to support survivors in the University community.

## **Funds to maintain collaboration between the University of Ottawa and agencies that support survivors**

For some years now, the University of Ottawa has partnered with two external agencies that specialize in support to survivors of sexual violence, namely the Ottawa Rape Crisis Centre and CALACS francophone d'Ottawa. The SCPSV believes in the importance of ensuring sustainable funding so that University community members have access to services for those affected by sexual violence. Moreover, the number of requests for such services has increased over the past few years, which demonstrates the importance of adequately funding such agencies to properly support University community members.

Finally, thanks to additional government funding received in 2019, the HRO was able to increase its hours of service to better meet the demand. The SCPSV recommends that this financial support be maintained to ensure that survivors receive adequate support services.

## **Online training**

In response to a request that certain campus partners submitted to the HRO, the SCPSV received a proposal to implement online training in sexual violence prevention aimed at students.

The HRO is currently working with Concordia University to adapt Concordia's online training to make it available to members of the uOttawa community. This will allow us to train a greater number of people on topics such as sexual violence, consent, the bystander effect, the survivor-centred approach, the services offered, and Policy 67b.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Standing Committee on the Prevention of Sexual Violence and the Human Rights Office are committed to pursuing their work and to collaborating with their various partners to help prevent and address incidents of sexual violence on campus.

We hope that the efforts made during this entire year, along with the initiatives implemented, will foster a healthy and safe environment for the entire University community.

In closing, we would like to sincerely thank students, faculty members, and support staff, as well as all our partners, for their commitment, support, and dedication to the fight against sexual violence on campus and in our community.