

The California State Auditor released the following report today:

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence

California Universities Must Better Protect Students by Doing More to Prevent, Respond to, and Resolve Incidents

BACKGROUND

Sexual harassment and sexual violence against university students is a serious issue nationally and a form of discrimination prohibited by law. Each of the universities we examined—University of California, Berkeley; University of California, Los Angeles; California State University, Chico; and San Diego State University—receive, report, and resolve complaints involving student-on-student sexual harassment and sexual violence.

KEY FINDINGS

In reviewing how the four universities handle sexual harassment and sexual violence incidents, we noted the following:

- Staff in key roles of the incident-reporting process receive adequate training on responding to and reporting student incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence, but other employees including resident advisors and athletic coaches, who may be the first point of contact, do not.
- None of the universities provides its sexual harassment policy to all employees at the start of each academic year, nor do they post the policies in certain places where a large number of students can see them such as in residence halls or athletic facilities.
- Generally, the universities do not educate incoming students near the time they first arrive on campus—students may be at a higher risk of sexual assault in their first weeks there—and two universities do not ensure that these students receive the education.
- Certain student groups, such as student athletes and fraternities and sororities, do not always receive additional training and for the most part, the education is not sufficient. Twenty-five percent of the 80 cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence that we reviewed involved members of fraternities or sororities or occurred at their events.
- While all four universities established a process to investigate and resolve complaints, we identified many concerns regarding informing students of what to expect from the process, providing status updates to the complainants and respondents, notifying them of case outcomes, and investigating complaints timely. More than half of the cases we reviewed did not demonstrate that complainants were informed of the outcome of an investigation.
- The universities do not track and summarize all reported student incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence to better evaluate data and identify trends, which could help shape outreach and protection efforts.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We recommend that the Legislature amend state law to require universities to do the following:

- Train all university employees annually on responding to and reporting sexual harassment and sexual violence and educate incoming students as close as possible to when they arrive on campus.
- Post their policies in additional prominent locations that students frequent such as residence halls and athletic facilities.

To the universities, we made numerous recommendations including that they do the following:

- Review and modify educational programs and provide more training and education to both university employees and incoming students. For employees, the training should be provided annually with additional training to staff who are likely to be the first point of contact. For incoming students, the content should cover the topics outlined in statute and should be provided within the first few weeks of their first semester or quarter. The universities should provide refresher training annually.
- Properly distribute and post their policy on sexual harassment.
- Regularly update students filing or responding to complaints on the status of investigations and notify them of the outcome. Trend and analyze information about reported incidents so that they can better serve students.