



Questions for Students and Parents to Ask Regarding Student Safety on Campus

1. How do students report an emergency?

Campuses make available one or more options for students to reach first responders in the event of an emergency, to include emergency telephone numbers, texting options, and smartphone applications. Ask too, what students can expect in the form of a confirmation and response when reporting an emergency.

2. How are students notified by the university in the event of a campus-wide emergency?

Colleges and universities may use a variety of messaging systems, to include smartphone alerts, text messaging, computer desktop notifications, social media announcements, as well as outdoor public address systems, LED signs, voice alarm systems, and more.

3. Is there a campus-wide emergency preparedness plan, and is it regularly reviewed and updated? If so, when was it last updated/reviewed?

No college campus is immune to an emergency, to include natural disasters, or other events that may put lives in danger. Colleges and universities commonly have campus-wide emergency preparedness plans that identify roles of public safety, campus administrators, and other departments for specific kinds of emergencies.

4. What is the authority of the campus police/public safety department, and what type of entry-level and ongoing training do they receive?

Campus law enforcement and safety agencies differ from one college or university to another. Officers may be sworn or nonsworn, armed or unarmed, or a combination thereof. Ask what training personnel receive to perform their duties and to work with the community and inquire about the frequency of regular training and drills.

5. What is the relationship between the campus police/public safety department and local or municipal police? How do these agencies work together to protect the community whether on or off campus?

Campus police and public safety departments, and law enforcement agencies in jurisdictions adjoining the campus, must work in close coordination to serve and protect students, faculty, employees, and campus visitors. This is a common practice during large events, as well as during campus-wide emergencies, and ongoing emergency drills and training.

6. What services and resources does the campus use to enhance community safety and security?

Campus public safety departments normally have a variety of services in place. These can include on-call safety escorts and smartphone safety applications for students. Stationary “blue light” emergency telephones may also be located throughout the campus. Crime prevention programs, self-defense courses, building security assessments, and systems for registering valuables such as laptops, bicycles and similar equipment are common practice. Ask about building and residence hall access control and alarm systems as well as what safety drills are in place. Also inquire what actions and initiatives are taken to establish a positive and engaged relationship between the campus police department and the student community.

7. How does the campus handle reports of bias and gender-based violence and what role do the campus police/public safety play?

Ask how campus police and public safety department personnel are trained to treat and address reports of bias and gender-based violence from victims/survivors, and how they ensure equitable and unbiased delivery of campus safety services. Also, ask for an understanding of efforts to monitor and measure the comfort level of students with reporting such offenses to campus authorities.

8. How does the campus handle behavioral threat assessment and who conducts the assessments?

Many colleges and universities now utilize a Behavioral Threat Assessment Model (BTAM), a formal process that fosters communication between campus staff, faculty, and students, to recognize and assess behaviors of students who may be at risk of committing violence to themselves or others. A trained campus BTAM team assesses the level of concern and identifies preventive and supportive intervention techniques and services to prevent self-inflicted or violent actions.

9. What campus services are in place and accessible to support student mental health? And what level of training is provided to your campus police/public safety on mental health?

Colleges and universities place a high priority on student mental health and well-being. Ask how campus officers are trained on student mental health issues and how that training supports their role and student safety. Also ask how the campus public safety department communicates and coordinates its efforts with campus health and counseling services.

10. When does the campus publish its annual security report? What does the report contain, and how is it distributed?

The 1990 Clery Act requires all U.S. colleges and universities that receive federal funding to disseminate a public annual security report to campus employees and students on October 1. The report must include statistics of campus crime and fire statistics, among other information, for the preceding three calendar years, as well as details on efforts undertaken by the college or university to improve campus safety.