



Massachusetts Department of Higher Education

Initial Charge to Commissioner's Task Force on Campus Safety and Violence Prevention

January 2016

Charge

Through a coordinated effort, the Task Force will assess existing policies and practices on campus safety and violence prevention and, guided by research on national best practice, will make recommendations to help enhance public and private higher education institutions' efforts to properly identify, prevent, and respond to campus violence, with a special focus on campus sexual violence and emerging technologies.

Context and Background

At its first meeting of the 2014-15 academic year, the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education declared a "zero tolerance" for sexual violence, including "stalking, dating violence, domestic violence, harassment and sexual assault, which can have devastating effects on individual victims, as well as serious negative consequences for colleges and universities." The BHE directed the Commissioner of Higher Education to a coordinate statewide effort among the public colleges and universities to strengthen campus policies around sexual assault prevention, and to review the Board's own guidelines on prevention and response.

The zero tolerance statement was a follow-up to a 2008 campus violence prevention initiative which included the establishment of a campus safety and violence prevention work group. With the assistance of a consultant, the work group conducted a study and prepared a report entitled, *Campus Violence Prevention and Response: Best Practices for Massachusetts Higher Education* (June 2008). The report included 27 specific recommendations organized in six categories: Early Detection and Prevention; Physical and Electronic Security; Campus Police Department; Mass Notification; Policies and Procedures; and Emergency Response.

The 2008 best practices document, though a solid document for its time, has its shortcomings. Drafted in the wake of the Virginia Tech shooting, it focuses almost exclusively on active shooter violence and does not fully address campus sexual violence, including the risks of assaults of minors on campus. Sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence and stalking are serious problems, and young people are especially at risk. Nearly half of female survivors were raped before they were 18, and over one-quarter of male survivors were raped before they were 10. College students are particularly at risk: an estimated 1 in 5 women has been sexually assaulted while in college. This is an issue at campuses nation-wide, and the Commonwealth's public and private colleges and universities are not excluded.

In addition, much has changed on our campuses and in the world at large since the 2008 best practices document was issued nearly seven years ago. It is time for the report to be evaluated

and updated to include most recent guidance on active shooter prevention and response, to assess its implementation at the campus level, and to include recommendations specific to campus sexual violence.

Finally, the document must be reviewed to ensure inclusionary and culturally sensitive practices to help ensure that public higher education institutions are safe and supportive environments for all students, regardless of their race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity. A review of campus safety recommendations should include an analysis of cultural competency training for faculty and staff, and the development of system-wide response guidelines on hate crimes and incidents of bias against members of protected classes.

The Department of Higher Education secured additional funding in the FY2016 budget to conduct this assessment. See Section 2 of Chapter 46 of the Acts of 2015 (7066-0000).

Specific Goals and Outcomes

With the assistance of one or more consultants, review the Board of Higher Education’s 2008 “best practice” recommendations on campus safety and violence prevention with the goals of:

- 1) assessing the status of implementation at the Commonwealth’s 29 public higher education institutions;
- 2) evaluating the currency and relevancy of the recommendations as they relate to active shooter prevention and response, and amending the recommendations as necessary;
- 3) amending the recommendations to appropriately incorporate new guidance and best practice recommendations on identifying, preventing, reporting and responding to campus sexual violence, including protecting minors on campus;
- 4) ensuring that any final recommendations encourage cultural sensitivity by, among other things, using inclusive language and assessing response guidelines on hate crimes and incidents of bias against members of protected classes; and
- 5) offering any other recommendations, including recommendations on emerging technologies and budgetary recommendations, regarding how Massachusetts public and private higher education institutions can best improve their campus security and violence prevention efforts.

Next Steps/ Timeline

The Department posted a Request for Proposals (RFP) for consultant services to assist in this assessment, and RFP responses were due on January 7, 2016. A subgroup of the Task Force, consisting of volunteers, will help in the selection process. Following the selection of a consultant it is anticipated that the Task Force will meet at least monthly. Target milestones for the work of the Task Force are set forth below:

Mid- January, 2016	Consultant selected.
Late- January, 2016	Task Force kick-off meeting; draft work plan

	established.
Late- January 2016/ Early February 2016	Consultant surveys developed and scope of research identified; conference planning discussions to offer trainings and present recommendations.
February 2016	Consultant led research and survey phase
March 2016	Consultant led research and survey phase
April 2016*	Initial findings reviewed and discussed with Task Force; BHE Committee discussions on preliminary recommendations (April 26)
May 2016*	Draft recommendations prepared
June 2016	Submission of recommendations to BHE; Statewide conference and training for public and private higher education stakeholders on campus safety.
*more frequent meetings/ conference calls with Task Force or subgroup are anticipated in April and May	

Additional Resources

Campus Violence Prevention and Response: Best Practices for Massachusetts Higher Education (2008)

<http://www.mass.edu/library/reports/campusviolencepreventionandresponse.pdf>

BHE 15-01: Resolution Regarding Campus Sexual Violence:

http://www.mass.edu/bhe/lib/documents/BHE/BHE15-01Resolution_CampusSexualViolence_final.pdf

Current State University and Community College Segmental Affirmative Action Plans:

<http://www.mass.edu/foradmin/humanresources/affirmativeactionplans.asp>

Section 2 of Chapter 46 of the Acts of 2015, Line Item 7066-000: "...provided further, that not less than \$100,000 shall be provided to the department to support assessment and coordination of a system-wide effort to address campus violence, with an emphasis on properly identifying, reporting and responding to sexual violence, coordinating and offering training initiatives and fostering a culture of inclusivity."

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