



HIGHER HEALTH

Higher Education and Training
Health, Wellness and Development Centre

Protocol on Safety in Residences (Draft)

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Protocol on Safety in Residences¹

1. Regarding residences, a number of problems have been identified that must be addressed. Some of the problems that occur are:
 - a. Overcrowded campus residences have been identified as breeding grounds for SGBV because students are forced to sleep in situations that are not conducive to safety.
 - b. A culture of alcohol and drug abuse in residences perpetuates gendered norms and increases risks of sexually violent behaviour.
 - c. A weekend party culture prevails in some residences, and female students, particularly first year students are particularly vulnerable, frequently being pressurised into consuming alcohol and drugs and engaging in unprotected sex.
 - d. First year students, in particular, are frequently open to sexually risky situations having left the protection of their home environments.
 - e. Student leaders and senior students who are responsible for providing and allocating accommodation at residences sometimes use their power and authority to coerce students into engaging in transactional sex in exchange for accommodation (i.e. sex for rooms).
 - f. Financially vulnerable students find themselves in abusive relationships with senior students who pay for their food and other necessities in exchange for sex (i.e. sex for basic needs).
 - g. Shared ablution facilities, between men and women, may facilitate SGBV.
 - h. A failure to limit visiting hours can increase the risk of SGBV.
 - i. Poorly lit residences can be unsafe spaces for female students.
 - j. Areas in which male students congregate, in other words, masculinised spaces, and through which female students must walk can be a focal point of unwanted encounters.
 - k. Female students do not feel safe in their own rooms because security might be lax and male students or even outsiders are able to gain access.
2. Some of the measures campus residences can adopt to minimise the risks are to:
 - a. Adopt and implement rules regarding visiting hours at residences.
 - b. Provide separate ablution facilities for men and women.
 - c. Take the allocations of accommodation in residences out of the hands of student leadership and place it under the supervision of staff. Or if it remains in the hands of students monitor and have strict rules and criteria for accommodation allocation, in accordance with a policy.
 - d. Ensure lighting is adequate around the outside of residences.
 - e. Ensure adequate lighting inside residence corridors, passages, common areas and entrances.
 - f. Provide adequate security presence at residences, particularly throughout the night when most sexual violence attacks take place, including the use of cameras, and ensure that security staff are adequately trained in dealing with SGBV.
 - g. Ensure the number of students in residences is managed in accordance with the amount of accommodation provided and do not fill the residences beyond their allotted capacity.
 - h. Set up policing forums made up of students, security and staff to monitor residences and assist if there are incidents of SGBV.
 - i. Encourage residence/house committees to elect 'Gender Officers' who are trained in the SGBV Policy.
 - j. Run annual, mandatory gender orientation programmes for residence staff, leadership of residence/house committees as well as for the entire residence community.
 - k. Enable students the right to request a relocation to a different residence in situations where they are being harassed, intimidated or abused in any way.

¹ This protocol draws on research conducted by B. Anderson and C. Naidu on sexual violence at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. See: <https://www.journals.ac.za/index.php/sajhe/article/download/4800/3187>

- l. Use house mothers, wardens and other staff in residences to monitor safety and security of students, particularly female students.
 - m. Ensure that there are no unsafe spaces in residences and have rules that restrict access by male students to female student private residence rooms, which should be safe spaces.
 - n. Ensure that all private rooms in residences have locks on doors.
 - o. Ensure that students have access to counselling services, legal services, security services and any other support services.
 - p. Encourage reporting of violations of the institution's SGBV policy, inform resident students of the policy and take action against alleged perpetrators.
 - q. Conduct an annual safety audit at the residence to identify areas of concern that students identify, that must be dealt with in order to create a safer environment.
3. The management in residences should be intricately involved in creating a zero tolerance environment in respect of SGBV at residences. Wardens, house mothers and other staff should play a role in both prevention of SGBV and providing support to SGBV victims. Should incidents take place in the residences, they should provide initial support to victims that might include ensuring they are given medical, psychosocial and other assistance and that they are referred to the **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE** as soon after the incident as possible. They should work collaboratively with campus protection services or any other department that works outside office hours to take reports on SGBV, and with the **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE**.
4. PSET institutions should prepare a SGBV resource pack for residences that consists of:
- a. Pamphlets on SGBV that set out the institution's policy on SGBV.
 - b. Information and educative pamphlets that provide content aimed at preventing SGBV. For example on consent, on gender equality, on toxic masculinities, on the danger of alcohol and drug abuse in relation to SGBV.
 - c. Posters that can be affixed to walls in visible locations that set out informative messaging aimed at raising awareness and prevention of SGBV.
 - d. Posters or information sheets that are pasted in prominent areas with phone numbers of:
 - i. Campus protection services
 - ii. SAPS
 - iii. Nearby clinics/hospitals
 - iv. Campus counselling services
 - v. The **RESPONSIBLE OFFICE**
 - vi. NGOs, churches and other institutions that provide support to SGBV victims.