



Centering Student Voices

Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault & Stalking (DVSAS) on Campus:

Toolkit for Supporting Immigrant Students

(Fall 2023)



CAMPUS
Technical Assistance
and Resource Project



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Centering Student Voices: Toolkit for Supporting Immigrant Students

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Introduction

The purpose of this toolkit is to inform and assist college and university administration, staff, and students with addressing Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (DVSAS) for the immigrant student population. Content addresses the needs of OVW Campus Project grantees but this toolkit is also made available to the general public.

Content for this toolkit was created in the Fall of 2023, based on the key themes gathered from NOVA's listening sessions with college students who self-identified as a member of the immigrant student community. For the purposes of this toolkit, the immigrant student community reflects individuals who are noncitizens of the U.S., such as lawful permanent residents, people with nonimmigrant status, people with refugee status, people with deferred action, people who are undocumented, and students who may have non U.S. citizen family members. International students or individuals with F-1 Student Visas also participated in these listening sessions, and it's important to note that these students felt connected to the immigrant community and shared similar struggles with seeking out DVSAS services on campus.

A [glossary of terms](#) can be found in this toolkit to provide more context on the terms and statuses associated with immigrant students mentioned above.

Campus-based professionals and advocates working with students on campus will gain a better understanding of the immigrant student population, the obstacles and barriers they face on campus, and how programs and policies can be more inclusive of immigrant student needs.



Acknowledgements

In the summer of 2022, the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) conducted a series of three 90-minute immigrant student listening sessions to better understand the culture, needs, and experiences immigrant students face when navigating their campus services, policies, and prevention education related to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking (DVSAS). We are grateful to the college students who shared their perspectives during these sessions and contributed to the development of this toolkit, as well as our organizational partners who reviewed and provided feedback on the development of this toolkit; Alteristic, Asista, and the Victim's Rights Law Center.

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Immigrant Students in Higher Education

The Presidents' Alliance on Higher Education and Immigration reports that in 2021, more than 5.6 million students, or 31% of all students enrolled in colleges and universities, were immigrants or children of immigrants. (1)

As the number of immigrant students in higher education rises, colleges and universities will need to increase their understanding of who makes up the immigrant community and intentionally plan for what the campus community can do to better engage and serve immigrant students.

As colleges and universities work collectively with students and advocates to understand and serve immigrant students, it's important to remember that immigrants often have many intersecting identities. These marginalized identities may include their race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, economic status, and immigration status or their families immigration status. As with other students who have been historically marginalized, the intersections of these identities and systems of oppression such as racism, sexism, classism, ageism, and ableism put them at a higher risk for DVSA victimization on campus.(2)

The term “immigrant” is often used with various immigrant communities from those who are undocumented, come from mixed-status families, and those who have temporary or permanent legal status. For the purposes of this toolkit the term “immigrant” includes students of nonimmigrant status such as student (“F”) visas. The following definitions are shared to assist campus-based professionals and advocates with understanding the terms that are often associated with the immigrant community. Understanding the definitions of these terms and working to understand how these terms apply to the immigrant community on your campus is an opportunity for engagement with immigrant students to better understand **how**, **when**, and **why** they relate to or use certain terms.

(1) <https://www.presidentsalliance.org/media/what-the-rise-in-immigrant-students-means-for-american-colleges/>

(2) <https://www.tahirih.org/news/understanding-the-intersections-of-sexual-assault-and-immigration-status/>

Immigrant Students in Higher Education: Glossary

Immigrant: A person who is not a U.S. citizen. Examples include noncitizens, such as lawful permanent residents, people with nonimmigrant status, people with refugee status, people with deferred action, and people who are undocumented.

Non-immigrant: A person who has been lawfully admitted to the United States for a specific purpose (e.g. work or study) for a temporary stay that will end when its purpose has been accomplished and the visa expires.(3)

Undocumented Immigrant: In the United States, the term "undocumented immigrant" refers to individuals present in the country without authorization.(3) This also includes people who entered the U.S. without authorization as well as people who entered the U.S. with authorization, but their authorization to be in the U.S. has expired.

Refugee: A person seeking protection and a safe place to live outside their country of origin who are unable or unwilling to return because of past persecution and/or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. One year after arriving in the United States, a refugee can apply to become a lawful permanent resident (LPR), and after five more years, can apply for U.S. citizenship.(3)

Mixed-Status: A “mixed-status family” is a family whose members include people with different citizenship or immigration statuses. One example of a mixed-status family is one in which the parents are undocumented and the children are U.S. born citizens. The number of mixed-status families is growing, as of 2019, more than a quarter of young children in the United States were children of immigrants, and nearly 90 percent of these children were U.S. citizens.(4)

(3)<https://www.freedomforimmigrants.org/terminology#:~:text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20the,take%20on%20some%20negative%20connotations.>

(4)https://www.nilc.org/issues/health-care/aca_mixedstatusfams/#:~:text=The%20number%20of%20mixed%2Dstatus,these%20children%20were%20U.S.%20citizens

Immigrant Students in Higher Education: Glossary

Permanent resident: A lawful permanent resident (LPR), also known as “green card” holder, is a non-citizen who is lawfully authorized to live permanently within the United States.(5)

International student: The F-1 Visa (Academic Student) allows an individual to enter the United States as a full-time student at an accredited college, university, seminary, conservatory, academic high school, elementary school, or other academic institution or in a language training program. Student must be enrolled in a program or course of study that culminates in a degree, diploma, or certificate and the school must be authorized by the U.S. government to accept international students.(6)

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA): On June 15, 2012, the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain people who came to the United States as children and meet several guidelines may request consideration of deferred action for a period of 2 years, subject to renewal. They are also eligible to request work authorization. Deferred action is an exercise of prosecutorial discretion to defer removal action against an individual for a certain period of time. Deferred action does not provide lawful status.(6)

DREAMer: When it comes to immigration reform, a “Dreamer” (often also spelled “DREAMer”) refers to an immigrant youth who qualifies for the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act. Dreamers are also frequently referred to as “DACA recipients”, though the latter specifically refers to Dreamers who have applied for and received DACA relief.(7)

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[Additional resources and terms can be found in the resource section of this toolkit.](#)

(5) Department of Homeland Security

(6) U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

(7) Americas Voice

Centering Student Voices: Strategies to Improve Campus Culture for Immigrant Students

In the summer of 2022, the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA) conducted a series of three 90-minute immigrant student listening sessions with 50 immigrant college students. Participants shared their lived experiences as an immigrant student on their college campus, while shedding light on how they received prevention education and support related to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking (DVSAS).

The following strategies were developed based on the feedback, dialogue, and themes shared by immigrant students to build the capacity of professionals working to increase support for victims and survivors representing culturally specific communities.

1

Transparency, Privacy, and Confidentiality

2

Tailored DVSAS Prevention Education

3

Building Immigrant Community Connections on Campus

4

Culturally Responsive Training and Policy Review

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Transparency, Privacy, and Confidentiality

In NOVA’s listening sessions, immigrant students expressed concerns related to **when** and **how** they are asked to share their identity and immigration status on campus. For example, students expressed that they are often reluctant to access services when they see forms that request personal information such as their immigration status without a clear explanation as to why that information is needed. While students understood these questions are used to screen students for applicable support services, they questioned the lack of transparency and emphasized that overall the campus could do better to communicate **why** they need this information and **what** they will do with this information. Institutions of higher education are generally not required by federal law to ask about student immigration status as a measure of college enrollment (7) or participation in victim services; however each state and institution may have its measures or needs for gathering this information such as collecting data for grants or informal measures for campus climate surveys.

Immigrant students in the listening sessions were very honest about the fear they face when considering to report incidents of assault or abuse. One student shared that they “didn’t understand how the information shared would remain private or not” another student feared that they would “not be believed because of their immigration status and skin color”. College students who are victims or survivors of DVSA receive the same rights under Title IX and the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), regardless of immigration and visa status, (8) and it’s important for the campus community to relay when and how services can remain private or confidential.

(7) <https://counselors.collegeboard.org/financial-aid/undocumented-students>

(8) <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>

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The Victim Rights Law Center offers the following suggestions for clarifying confidentiality while engaging with victims on campus “before safety planning with victims, you should review your own confidentiality policies and practices. Consider whether you are required to report for Title IX purposes or a Campus Security Authority for Clery Act purposes and discuss the implications with the victim.”(9)



Key Strategy - Create an assessment plan to evaluate forms such as intake forms, applications, and other ways student feedback is gathered. The goal should be to identify where identity and immigration status information is asked, and add language regarding the purpose of asking these questions. This can be a disclaimer at the top of the form for example, or in the question line that lists what is an optional question and what is required and where and how that information will be shared.



Key Strategy - Review campus procedures and familiarize yourself with your reporting requirements under Title IX, the Clery Act, or institutional policy. Use this information to discuss processes for collecting and reporting information related to student identity and immigration status and when information can remain private or confidential. Language can be created based on campus policies on intake forms and interview processes for example, with the goal of improving transparent communication and understanding the differences between private and confidential. Being clear about how this information will be used can assist with building trust, and holds the asking parties accountable to explaining how or why this information can remain private or confidential.

(9)https://changingourcampus.org/application/files/1114/6098/7776/VRLC_MSCASA_afety_Planning_with_Campus_Sexual_Assault_Survivors_V10.pdf

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Tailored DVSAAS Prevention Education

Immigrant student participants in NOVA's listening sessions shared that while campus-wide initiatives to increase awareness are helpful, they felt more was needed in the area of providing prevention education that was tailored to their intersectional needs related to their immigration status, race, and sexual identity. Participants went on to share that when DVSAAS prevention education was delivered on campus the content seemed to be targeted toward students who had more privilege and access on campus or students who had the "majority voice" on campus. Immigrant students and U.S. citizen students with non U.S. citizen family members can benefit from culturally responsive prevention education that considers their intersectional needs and builds on the understanding of the risk and protective factors they carry due to their immigration status or their family's immigration status.

Campuses can benefit from completing an analysis of what their current prevention plans are and what curricula are being used in order to assess them for cultural responsiveness, intersectionality, and inclusion of trauma-informed practices. Tailoring prevention education for immigrant students can begin with identifying where information can better connect to an understanding of cultural differences, intergenerational trauma, and when and how cultural norms perpetuate or protect against DVSAAS. Concepts often connected to immigrant families such as collectivism, senses of belonging, intergenerational families and teachings, loss of history, and acculturation can contribute positively and negatively to an immigrant student's perception of violence and support. Prevention programming cannot and should not be generalized to only addressing the needs of immigrant students based on their immigration status - instead, planning should consist of identifying curricula and resources that truly recognize and respond to the intersectional needs of the immigrant population on campus.

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Key Strategy - College campuses and universities can benefit from an analysis and reflection process that gathers feedback directly from immigrant students. An analysis of students, staff, and faculty regarding their experiences with current prevention education strategies should be conducted to identify the content, frequency, and method for delivering prevention education to students. This analysis would be best delivered through an active discussion with immigrant students; for example, hosting listening sessions, focus groups, key stakeholder interviews, or other formal and informal engagement strategies to hear directly from the students within the campus community. Staff from Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Teams or other multidisciplinary campus DVSAS teams can assist with this process of identifying how current prevention education strategies are inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive. Listening sessions for small group discussions can assist with filling the gaps in prevention education to ensure the content and delivery is deliberately inclusive and accessible.



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Key Strategy - College campuses can also consider other delivery strategies for prevention education implementation; for example, tailored discussions (roundtables or listening sessions) that coincide with campus-wide prevention education strategies. Consider engaging with culturally specific organizations that address the needs of immigrant students and students with family members who are non U.S. citizens, to tailor prevention education for marginalized student groups. When considering the frequency and method of prevention education delivery, address how often sessions are presented to students, and by whom. Is it only presented at campus-wide orientations or assemblies? How can you make prevention strategies inclusive of the needs of immigrant students on your campus?



Key Strategy - Address language access and review current prevention education practices and materials. Facilitation of content in multiple languages and by people with similar cultural backgrounds should be a priority in delivering tailored prevention education. Ensure an assessment has been made to understand the barriers immigrant students face. Consider creating a language access plan and ensuring materials are written and presented in the language(s) of the immigrant student populations on campus. This language access plan should be informed by data around the spoken and written languages of students on campus, if this data is not available, campuses should ensure they create an assessment or survey that is accessible to students who do not speak English as their first language.

Centering Student Voices: Strategies to Improve Campus Culture for Immigrant Students



Building Immigrant Community Connections on Campus

As the numbers of immigrant students continue to rise on college campuses and universities, it is important to invest in strategies that effectively engage and support the development of community connections for this diverse student population. Immigrant students navigate obstacles as they enter higher education, from economic insecurity, trauma, and heightened family responsibility. Immigrant students from NOVA's listening sessions shared that they felt "pressure to take care of their family" adding that for them as the "first ones to succeed" they carry a heightened level of awareness and expectation to not fail. Having this awareness and understanding of barriers that immigrant students face on campus can contribute to the development of opportunities for engaging with the community that centers their needs and realities.

Discussions with immigrant students during the NOVA listening sessions made it clear that building community connections on campus is often tied to how well represented students feel their identities are on a wider campus level. Along with representation in campus wide initiatives, immigrant students also struggle with feeling accepted by their peers. Many students are aware of anti-immigrant rhetoric on and around their campus which can impact bias and prejudice based on their immigrant status, and racial, ethnic identity. This can result in negative feelings of being "misunderstood" or "not as believed" due to their identities and immigration status as compared to their U.S. citizen student counterparts.

Centering Student Voices: Strategies to Improve Campus Culture for Immigrant Students



Key Strategy - College campuses and universities can benefit from identifying ways to integrate immigrant students into the larger campus community. Consider where opportunities exist to build immigrant student leadership into student engagement opportunities or on a campus Coordinated Community Response Team. If there are multiple immigrant communities from various regional or racial ethnic groups on campus consider how the differences in values and beliefs can impact connectivity. When creating engagement strategies or building “student community connections” carefully consider how you can address bias, prejudice, and stereotypes to avoid over generalizing or tokenizing groups of students.



Key Strategy - Professionals working on campus can should build their understanding of the immigrant community on their campus and surrounding community. Consider what factors can you identify or work to identify to build a better understanding of the immigrant community on your campus, and the immigrant community that surrounds your campus. Once you have a clear understanding of the difference in views for these students, it will help emphasize the reality that although immigrant students are often boxed into one category, the reality is immigrant students come from various countries, regions, and ethnic groups. This is especially true with immigrant students that carry intersectional identities such as an immigrant student who identifies as LGBTQIA+ or an immigrant student with disabilities.

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Culturally Responsive Training and Policy Review

Colleges and Universities working to engage diverse student populations such as the immigrant community can further support their efforts with the implementation of culturally responsive cross-departmental training and campus policy review. Training for faculty and staff and advocates working with students, especially those supporting victim services, should have an understanding of cultural competence and the importance of recognizing how an individual's identity and life experiences impacts DVSA victimization and their capacity to access services on campus. Identifying the needs and addressing specific biases immigrant students face is one step towards creating inclusion and belonging for all student survivors.

Immigrant students express concerns and barriers with campus policies that are related to victimization of DVSA. More specifically, undocumented students and international students face fears related to reporting while undocumented or having issues with temporary visas during a Title IX complaint or investigation. There continues to be a limited amount of resources available to immigrant students, especially those that are undocumented that clearly explains their rights to reporting and how their status, or the status of their perpetrator may be impacted or disclosed during an investigation.

It's important to note that survivors may also be hesitant to file a report if they feel that reporting could have a negative impact on the immigration status of the person they were reporting against. This fear and lack of knowledge around resources related to the impact of reporting and immigration status interferes with survivors making informed decisions around accountability and justice. Campuses can take this gap in services as an opportunity to strengthen current procedures and connect with student offices on campus or off campus community agencies working with immigrant or international students to provide culturally responsive and relevant resources.

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Key Strategy - Colleges and universities should develop a training and staff capacity building plan that focuses on the campus commitment to serving immigrant students and addresses ways the campus community can build their understanding of immigrant student identities, including addressing bias, prejudice, and power dynamics that may exist for students reporting or seeking out DVSA services. These trainings can support more inclusive environments and are also a great opportunity to include student voices and leadership to inform content development.



Key Strategy - Colleges and universities should have an inclusive and accessible outreach and communications strategy that incorporates the development of a language justice and accessibility plan. That coincides with the language access needs of the immigrant community on their campus and accounts for other access needs that students require on campus.



Key Strategy - The Coordinated Community Response Team can benefit from working with immigrant student services and community-based immigrant rights organizations and any other offices that support immigrant students such as embassies and consulates to develop a campus policy review process informed by current immigration policies.

Tools and Resources for Working with Immigrant Students

The following resources can be used as tools to further your efforts to support immigrant students on campus.

ASISTA - is a network of attorneys and advocates across the nation working at the intersection of immigration and gender-based violence.

<https://asistahelp.org/>

America's Voice - “Immigration 101 What is DACA?”

<https://americasvoice.org/blog/what-is-a-dreamer/>

Esperanza United - “Realidades Latinas The Impact of Immigration and Language Access”

[https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/3.11.12_NLNRealidades Latinas The Impact of Immigration and Language Access FINAL.pdf](https://esperanzaunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/3.11.12_NLNRealidades_Latinas_The_Impact_of_Immigration_and_Language_Access_FINAL.pdf)

Freedom For Immigrants - “Glossary of Immigration Terms”

<https://www.freedomforimmigrants.org/terminology#:~:text=In%20the%20United%20States%2C%20the,take%20on%20some%20negative%20connotations>

Immigration and Visa Information In Response To Sexual & Interpersonal Violence

- <https://www.suny.edu/violence-response/visa-and-immigration-resource/>

Immigration Research - “Immigrant College Student Academic Obstacles”

[https://www.immigrationresearch.org/system/files/Immigrant College Students Academic Obstacles.pdf](https://www.immigrationresearch.org/system/files/Immigrant_College_Students_Academic_Obstacles.pdf)

Tahirih Justice Center - “Understanding the Intersections of Sexual Assault and Immigration Status”

<https://www.tahirih.org/news/understanding-the-intersections-of-sexual-assault-and-immigration-status/>

The Victim Rights Law Center - provides free, comprehensive legal services for sexual assault victims with civil legal issues in Massachusetts and Oregon. VRLC attorneys represent survivors to train professionals nationwide to improve the response to sexual violence. <https://victimrights.org/resource-library/>

Tools and Resources for Working with Immigrant Students

The Center for Changing Our Campus Culture - provides the latest research, sample campus policies, protocols, best practices, and information on how to access training opportunities and technical assistance.

<https://changingourcampus.org/>

OVW's Campus Program Technical Assistance (TA) Providers - can provide free support to grantees looking to build their capacity for prevention and response efforts under the U.S. Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women OVW Campus grants in the following concept areas:

- **Alteristic, Comprehensive Prevention & Education** - www.alteristic.org
- **Clery Center, Clery Center Act Requirements** - www.clerycenter.org
- **East Central University, Campus Law Enforcement & Security** - www.ecok.edu/current-students/student-services/centers-programs/sttaable
- **Mississippi Coalition Against Sexual Assault Campus, Victim Services & Advocacy** - www.msCasa.org
- **National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA), Coordinated Community Response (CCR) Teams & Culturally Specific Communities** - www.trynova.org/nova-campus-program/ Email: CampusTA@trynova.org
- **Futures without Violence, Engaging Men** - <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/>
Email: EngagingMen@FuturesWithoutViolence.org
- **Soteria Solutions, Assessment & Strategic Planning** - www.soteriasolutions.org
- **Ujima Inc., The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCU)** - www.ujimacomunity.org
- **Victim Right Law Center (VRLC), Student Conduct Training, Response, & Policy** - www.victimrights.org



NOVA



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