

The Role of Campus Security



Increased officer presence and vigilance on campuses nationwide has raised questions about the role of security at colleges and universities. While many like to think so, higher education institutions are not immune from violence, crimes, and other legal issues. Most campus security departments function like any other local or state police agency. The police officers are present to maintain safety and order, as well as to educate students on personal safety.

Different Names: Similar Goals
Campus security departments go by a variety of different names from campus to campus. For example:

- ▲ Public Safety
- ▲ Campus Police
- ▲ Campus Security
- ▲ Campus Law Enforcement
- ▲ Community Police Officers

Most campus police departments are responsible for:

- conducting regular patrols of buildings and grounds via foot, bicycle, and/or vehicle
- responding to mental and physical health emergencies and facilitating the response of the appropriate professionals
- enforcing parking regulations
- confronting violations of campus, local, and/or federal law
- notifying the campus of potential and actual occurrences of crime activity
- providing escort services
- looking out for students' safety
- presenting crime prevention seminars
- maintaining and reporting crime statistics
- helping maintain security and order at campus events

First and foremost, campus security officials provide help and protection. Students should always feel comfortable calling campus police for assistance – at any time of day or night. You should too. If you are concerned about your student, calling campus police is your best bet. The department may be able to notify your student that you are trying to reach him and request that he call home or put you in touch with the appropriate professionals on campus. There is often

an after-hours on-call system in place on campuses. The campus security department can page professional staff members to assist in real emergencies.

Campus security rarely gets the respect it deserves. Many people don't realize that they have received the same training and possess the same credentials as the police officers we see in towns and cities. In fact, campus police departments are often comprised of current and retired police officers. They work in collaboration with local police and fire departments to provide a safe and secure campus community.

Campus Crime Reporting

Students often have an unrealistic idea about the level of safety on their campus. How aware is your student of the most commonly committed crimes on her campus? Does she know how to find out this information?

The Clery Act, a landmark federal law, requires colleges across the United States to disclose information about crimes on and around campus. This includes publishing an annual report of statistics, notifying the community about crimes that pose a safety threat, and maintaining a public crime log.

The U.S. Department of Education is responsible for enforcing this law. The Clery Act applies to most colleges, whether public or private. Those found in violation of the act can be fined and become ineligible for federal financial aid funding.

The "Clery Act" is named in memory of Lehigh University (PA) freshman Jeanne Ann Clery, who was raped and murdered while sleeping in her residence hall room on April 5, 1986.

In most cases, crime statistics can be found on a college's campus security website. If not, encourage your student to find out where to get a copy of the report of statistics. Additionally, ensure your student is aware of how the institution notifies the campus community of potential/actual crimes. Most likely, it's via email. If that's the case, hitting "delete" when receiving an email from campus police is not a good idea. Even though there are professionals available to protect the campus community, your student's personal safety is her responsibility.