

# CREATING SAFER SPACES



*4 Steps to Prevent a Double Red Zone at Cal Poly  
Fall 2021*

*Developed by Cal Poly Safer*



**CAL POLY**  
Safer  
CAMPUS HEALTH  
& WELLBEING

# WHAT IS THE RED ZONE?

The Red Zone is a phenomenon in which more than 50% of all campus sexual assaults for the academic year take place in the first 6 weeks of fall quarter - and often more narrowly within the first few days of school.

This year, we are considering the potential of a "Double Red Zone," as both first years, transfers AND second years are navigating our campus environment for the very first time - doubling the population at potential risk.

## **This is preventable. It doesn't have to be this way.**

Luckily, we have you. We are in a unique position this year - where half of our students are new, and the other half are returning. That means we have an incredible opportunity for culture shift - with your help, we can create NEW norms for the new incoming half of the population, and set the stage for a safer, healthier future at Cal Poly.

# WHY DOES THE RED ZONE OCCUR?

There are many reasons why incoming students are at higher risk of sexual violence. As always, sexual violence is never the responsibility of the victim/survivor to prevent - the onus is **always** on the person who's causing harm. However, understanding what puts folks at risk can help us address potential harm - and lookout for ways to prevent this from ever happening.

Some reasons incoming students may be at higher risk:

- Power differentials between first years & returning students
- Learning newfound independence - moving away from home, not being familiar with this environment
- Lack cohesive, trustworthy peer group - wanting to connect quickly with others
- Inexperience with safe alcohol/other drug use (and pressure/coercion to use)
- Anxiety about starting a new chapter in life
- Lack explicit models of how to embody healthy sexuality
- Broader cultural context of apathy & general tolerance of sexual assault
- Minimal primary prevention education

Here's some information on what you can do to keep our campus community safe. Hopefully these 4 steps help you create Safer spaces!

# **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

## **1. LOCATE YOUR POWER ON CAMPUS.**

Consider the places & spaces in which you have power & experience on campus. Perhaps, you're a House Chair of your fraternity; maybe you're a President of a Club; perhaps you're a WOW Leader; maybe you're the captain of your Athletics team. Whatever position of leadership you're in, this is a great chance to use it - you have the power to help create environments that don't provide space for sexual violence to occur.

Ask yourself about the physical spaces & peer social environments you specifically have control over:

- Your own apartment/house
- Your lettered FSL house
- Club meetings
- WOW trainings & events
- Community centers
- Athletics training rooms/locker rooms
- Many, many more!

# **WHAT CAN WE DO?**

## **2. BRAINSTORM WAYS THESE SPACES MAY FACILITATE PREDATORY BEHAVIOR.**

Many of these relate to parties, so some of these may or may not apply to your space(s) - but hopefully this list gets your brain thinking of tangible things:

- Are areas well-lit? Can folks clearly see where entrances and exits are?
- What is the room capacity? Are people able to move about freely without touching another person?
- What is the lighting like? Are people able to see clearly around them?
- If alcohol/substances are provided: Do folks know what they are consuming? Who is in control of these? Can that control be more equitable?
- Is there pressure to consume more than their limits? Is there peer pressure to participate in risky drinking games? What is the culture if someone doesn't want to participate?
- Do folks have access to water & food?
- Are there gendered expectations? (i.e. parties requiring more female-identified folks than male-identified)
- Are there dress codes? What messages do these dress codes send?
- Are there date requirements/expectations? What messages around cisheteronormativity do these send?
- Is there a culture about gossiping with your peers about sexual "conquests"? Do you & your peers brag about "body counts"? How can you address this?
- Are there areas that are designated for hooking up? Who has access to these spaces?

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

## 3. QUESTION YOUR OWN THOUGHTS & ATTITUDES.

We have been socialized our whole lives to believe certain things about dating, sex and relationships in our culture - and college is often a time that we work to unlearn some of these toxic narratives.

Take a moment to think to yourself: are any of these thoughts/beliefs you've had? How can you deconstruct these? How might you engage with your peers to talk about the impact of these beliefs? (*Note: Don't shame yourself if you've thought these things before. Our culture has promoted these ideas our whole lives! However, now knowing they are harmful, we all must actively work to move away from these norms - to keep all of us safe.*)

- Depending on alcohol/drugs to have sex
  - Drugs/alcohol can be used to coerce or incapacitate someone. It can impair our decision-making and ability to read social cues, potentially resulting in us harming someone else.
- Thinking consent is awkward/weird, so skipping it
  - Consent is **always** necessary - it's the baseline expectation when having sex with someone. If you can't talk about sex, maybe you're not ready to have it! Sex IS communication.
- Wanting to have a higher "body count" than your friends (i.e. the number of people you've had sex with)
  - People are not just bodies! They are people - with their own wants, needs, desires, and boundaries - just like you.
- Wanting to hook up with freshmen
  - Question why someone who's inexperienced and vulnerable is alluring to you.

# WHAT CAN WE DO?

## 4. PARTNER WITH SAFER.

This might all feel really overwhelming. That's okay. You don't have to do this alone - we're here to help.

***"No one can do everything, but everyone can do something."***

As with any cultural change, we need **everyone** on board. Each and every one of us has to step up, when we have the power and privilege to do so. And as an upperclassmen on campus, you have some level of power and privilege just by having experience here.

If you want to talk through your plans, ask questions, brainstorm, or just talk, you can always email our Prevention Specialist, Jennifer MacMartin at [jmacmart@calpoly.edu](mailto:jmacmart@calpoly.edu) or schedule a meeting at [calendly.com/jmacmart](https://calendly.com/jmacmart).

We want our entire Cal Poly community to feel safe, supported and welcome here. As leaders on this campus, you have the opportunity to set that tone.

We're with you.

Thank you.