



# Rape Crisis Center

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**Contacts:**

Beth Shippert-Myers  
Rape Crisis Center  
Director of Marketing and Development  
608-251-5126 or [Beth@theRCC.org](mailto:Beth@theRCC.org)

Erin Thornley-Parisi  
Rape Crisis Center  
Executive Director  
608-251-5126 or [Erin@theRCC.org](mailto:Erin@theRCC.org)

## The Rape Crisis Center Stands in Opposition to Secretary DeVos' Planned Changes to Title IX

(MADISON,WI) Today, Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos decided to upend the rules governing the way schools (primary, secondary, and colleges will all be affected) handle sexual assault and harassment allegations. These new rules will negatively affect survivors, making it even more difficult than it already is to prove sexual assault – while at the same time giving new rights to perpetrators. In the time of #MeToo and #TimesUp, with all the growth our country is continuing to achieve to stop sexual assault and harassment from growing, this is particularly offensive to us at the Rape Crisis Center.

Under President Obama, sexual harassment was defined as "unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature." DeVos is redefining sexual harassment as unwelcome conduct that is "so severe, pervasive and objectively offensive that it denies a recipient's education program or activity." What's the difference? The difference is in how hard it is to prove. Because under this new rule, if the victim returns to school, then the conduct isn't denying their education, and therefore, is no longer considered harassment. As it is sexual assault is more prevalent at college compared to other crimes ([per RAINN](#)), but also under-reported, with only 20% of victims reporting sexual assault on campus. Instead of looking for new ways to end sexual assault on campus or finding ways to make reporting sexual assault less daunting – DeVos is taking the opposite tack, making reporting a near impossibility for many who want to continue studies at the school they chose.

Perhaps even more offensively, DeVos is opening up an alley for perpetrators to be able to cross-examine their accusers (albeit through an intermediary). The distrust and disbelief this shows for survivors is appalling to us, as is the potential for re-traumatization of a survivor.

We oppose all the proposed egregious changes to Title IX law; changes that will make it less safe to attend school, and we believe that it will actively discourage students from coming forward.

The RCC strongly encourages the community to take the opportunity to join us in opposing this weakening of protections for students and survivors, by making a public comment – the only way to voice opposition to this change. Public comment to the Federal Department of Education should open sometime next week. To be notified when that occurs, End Rape on Campus has put together an email alert to let you know when the notice and comment period (only 60 days long, once opened) has begun: <https://www.handsoffix.org/submit-a-comment>

We can stop these Title IX changes from occurring, but only if we speak up and stand up for survivors, together.

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Serving Dane County and the surrounding area since 1973, the Rape Crisis Center (RCC) provides services to the survivors (and their family and friends) of all forms of sexual violence, including recent sexual assault, past sexual assault, incest (past or present), sexual harassment, and sexual exploitation.

These services are provided free of charge and include crisis intervention and support (24 hour Helpline and on-call Advocate/Counselors), short-term counseling, support groups, medical/legal advocacy and accompaniment, community education, and Chimera Self-Defense. RCC serves women, children, and men.

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