In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education’s (USDE) Office for Civil Rights “Dear Colleague Letter” specified how schools should respond to reports of sexual assault to be in compliance with Title IX. In 2017, these guidelines were rescinded, leaving some criticizing the new regulations. In 2021, President Biden signed an Executive Order, directing the USDE to review Title IX regulations and to provide new guidance. While national bodies are reviewing the Title IX practices, some survivors and activists have identified Title IX failures. As a result, lawsuits have emerged against colleges and universities. This review outlines university betrayal of sexual assault survivors and implications for improving colleges and university’s responses to empowering survivors and raising awareness.

### Literature Review

**Sexual Assault Statistics**
- In a study, 33.8% of women experienced at least one form of sexual assault as a college student (Holland & Cortina, 2017).
- In another study, 24.2% of women and 15.6% of men experienced some form of sexual victimization while in college (Jouriles et al., 2020).
- Ninety percent of sexual assault survivors do not report assaults that occur while in college (Conley & Griffith, 2016).

**Institutional Betrayal**
- Institutional betrayal occurs when a college/university deliberately or unknowingly causes harm to an individual who trusts the institution to keep them safe (Stader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017).
- Institutional betrayal factors may include unclear reporting methods, punitive policies, and victim-blaming (Stader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017).
- There has been a recent increase in Title IX lawsuits against colleges and universities due to Title IX violations involving sexual victimization reports (Stader & Williams-Cunningham, 2017).

**Experiences of Sexual Assault Survivors**
- Survivors are more likely to experience overwhelming anger and suicidal ideation (Keefe et al., 2018), depression, sleep problems, sexual problems, and dissociation (Bedera, 2021).
- In some cases, reporting survivors (e.g., Megan Wright) have been denied a Title IX investigation following a sexual assault or rape, which has led to school drop-outs and suicides (Krastins, 2019).
- One study found 67% of reporting survivors experienced lower grades, missing classes, and overall lower academic performance due to being sexually assaulted (Potter et al., 2018).
- Potter et al. (2018) found that 58% of sexual assault survivors experienced an interruption in obtaining their degree, taking a semester off, or dropping out of school.

**Helping Victims**
- Colleges and universities must comply with Title IX mandates to provide comprehensive advocacy and counseling services to survivors (Conley & Griffith, 2016).
- College and university staff (e.g., student affairs) should work to raise awareness and support for empowering student survivors (Conley & Griffith, 2016).
- Professors can provide class time to discuss services for survivors (Bendera, 2021).
- Safety planning should be a college/university goal, while also helping survivors find a voice (Conley & Griffith, 2016).

**Implications & Suggestions**
- The U.S. Department of Education should create clear guidelines regarding Title IX policies for colleges/universities.
- All colleges/universities should provide ongoing mandatory training regarding sexual assault and rape for all students.
- Title IX should require all colleges/universities to offer multiple counseling services to survivors.
- Campus-based advocates can assist survivors as they navigate the system and interact with various offices, agencies, and campus authorities (Brubaker, 2019).
- Consideration can also be given to the use of restorative justice practices to address campus sexual assault (Koss et al., 2014).

### References

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**Title IX: Institutional Betrayal and Survivors of Sexual Assault**

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