Chapter 3: Conducting a Resource Audit
Conducting a resource audit is one of the first essential steps in assessing the campus climate regarding sexual assault. A resource audit is a research method that examines publicly available program information and input from knowledgeable stakeholders to compile a comprehensive listing of the available resources within an organization.\(^1\)

The purpose of this chapter is to provide guidance to colleges and universities for conducting a resource audit as part of a campus climate assessment. The resource audit directly informs the development and administration of a student survey, the cornerstone of the assessment process. We offer a recommended process for undertaking a resource audit based on research evidence and the authors’ experience of conducting a resource audit at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, on the New Brunswick campus in mid-2014.

Throughout this document, we outline general steps on the process of conducting a resource audit. In gray boxes, you will also find examples of decisions the authors made to tailor the audit to the university environment at Rutgers. All research teams will be faced with choices like these, and the examples are meant to shed light on how they can be made. Other gray boxes describe how the process might be altered in a variety of school settings.

**THE VALUE OF A RESOURCE AUDIT**

A resource audit documents the campus infrastructure for responding to and preventing sexual violence.\(^2\) A significant strength of a resource audit is that it requires minimal resources to conduct and, once completed, produces a versatile tool for administrators, faculty, and students. The resource audit can be used in several ways:

- As a compendium of campus resources: The resource audit generates a compendium of campus policies, protocols, and programs addressing sexual assault. School officials may enhance the audit with user-focused content to create a resource guide for students, faculty, and staff.

- As the basis for campus climate survey questions: Researchers can use the information found in the resource audit to construct questions for the second phase of the campus climate assessment, the student survey. The survey can ask students the extent to which they are aware of the various services on campus, whether they have or would use the services, and what barriers to their use may exist.

- As the basis for evaluating comprehensiveness of services: In order to comply with federal mandates and recommendations, many schools will be obligated to establish new prevention programs and implement new direct services. However, before moving forward with new initiatives, it is essential that administrators first understand the complement of resources already available on campus.\(^3\) As researchers progress through the steps of a campus climate assessment, school officials can compare the listing of resources gathered from the audit, along with student survey results, to best practices and state and federal requirements for responding to and protections against sexual assault. This comparison will help officials to identify gaps in institutional responses to sexual violence on campus. Once these gaps have been identified, campus officials will be better equipped to develop an action plan that is evidence-based and meets state and federal mandates, while also addressing student needs.

**BEGINNING A RESOURCE AUDIT**

Although collecting campus-wide information may seem like an overwhelming task, it is possible to systematically gather data and produce comprehensive findings. To accurately capture the full range of resources on campus, the resource audit employs a three-phase method of data collection:

- **Phase 1: Preparation:** Before engaging in the resource audit, it is necessary to make decisions about the specific goals of the audit and, relatedly, who should conduct it.

- **Phase 2: Online Search:** The second phase is conducted online, using keyword searches and examining departmental websites.

- **Phase 3: Interviews:** Researchers conduct informational interviews with key stakeholders to ensure that the audit is capturing the full range of resources available on campus, including those that might not be formally defined or described online.

This product is part of *Understanding and Responding to Campus Sexual Assault: A Guide to Climate Assessment for Colleges and Universities*. For more information about the toolkit, additional toolkit chapters, and more about assessing your school’s climate regarding sexual assault, visit [http://vawc.rutgers.edu](http://vawc.rutgers.edu).
PHASE I: PREPARATION

Researchers must address several key questions before engaging in the resource audit.

Who Should Conduct the Resource Audit?

Administrators can enlist a team of researchers to conduct the resource audit as part of the campus climate assessment, as they are equipped to implement the audit according to rigorous research methods. Key questions and recommendations for compiling a research team can be found in Chapter 2: Fostering Collaborations: Building Capacity for a Campus Climate Assessment.

Researchers may also choose to consult their advisory board prior to beginning the resource audit to solicit input on the audit’s goals and boundaries.

What Should be Included in the Resource Audit?

The White House Task Force to Protect Students from Sexual Assault has described four distinct categories of sexual assault resources. To capture the full range of resources addressing sexual violence on campus, the following categories must be explored in the resource audit:

- **Sexual Assault Policies** refer to any explicitly codified policy that prohibits sexual assault from occurring on campus, at campus sponsored events, or off campus. These may be found online, in student handbooks, and through the Office of Student Safety, the Office of Student Conduct, Human Resources, and/or the Office of Student Affairs (or their corollaries).

- **Investigative and Adjudicative Protocols** refer to any procedures that a college or university offers students for formally reporting an incident of sexual violence to authorities or to school officials. This also includes procedures for school adjudication of claims of sexual assault on campus.

- **Services** refer to services on campus that provide support to student sexual assault survivors. Examples include crisis intervention services, mental health services, advocacy, and medical services.

- **Prevention programs** refer to any on-campus effort geared towards students to reduce the occurrence of sexual and relationship violence. Prevention efforts can include guest lectures, informational presentations, events to raise awareness about campus sexual assault, related sorority or fraternity events, and other activities aimed at minimizing the risk of sexual assault. Many colleges and universities also present students with information about how they, as bystanders, might act to prevent sexual assault of their peers in potentially risky situations.

Prior to conducting the audit, it is also important for researchers to develop a list of inclusionary criteria to specifically define the type of information to be included in the audit. These criteria will be used to determine whether information from the online search results and stakeholder interviews is related to sexual violence on campus and targets the desired outcome(s) of the audit. The primary goal of the audit is to compile a list of resources that can be used to identify gaps in the current institutional response to sexual violence. Therefore, researchers may want to consider the following questions while creating the inclusionary criteria for the resource audit:

Inclusionary Criteria on Our Campus

We developed a list of inclusionary criteria that we believe enabled us to best capture the full range of resources available on our campus. The inclusionary criteria used on our campus are as follows:

- The result must address sexual violence specifically (including terms such as rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual violence, dating violence, relationship abuse).

- The result must include either a service related to sexual violence explicitly or a policy/procedure related to sexual violence (includes responses to sexual violence or prevention).

- The service must be offered at Rutgers University’s New Brunswick campus.

- The policy or procedure described must specifically involve Rutgers students.

- The service’s listing must directly state where it is located and a procedure for how students can make an appointment or access the service.
• Should the audit capture resources addressing intimate partner violence, dating violence and stalking in addition to sexual violence?

• Should the audit include services, policies, or prevention programs that address sexual violence exclusively or services that address other student needs in addition to sexual violence, such as STI screenings done at the student health center?

• What constitutes an “on-campus” resource? Must it be physically on the campus?

• How specific does the information regarding a sexual violence resource need to be in order to be recorded?

The answers to these questions can help guide the development of criteria for the inclusion of resources located during the online phase of the audit. These criteria will also be used for the interview phase and will have implications for who will be interviewed, how information is captured, and how it is recorded. While having defined criteria prior to conducting the resource audit helps ensure that the process is systematic, researchers should feel able to alter the criteria if they prove unsuitable to the process once data collection begins.

For a more expansive audit, researchers may also choose to include resources that do not fall neatly into the categories described above. These may include awareness programs and efforts to disseminate information directed at sexual assault survivors.

PHASE II: CONDUCTING THE ONLINE SEARCH

As a large percentage of college students use the internet to find health and other information, it has been recommended that information about sexual assault be provided to students on the school’s website. Therefore, the online phase of the resource audit is essential and will be conducted using, in most cases, a keyword search of a school’s website and an examination of relevant departmental websites. Results, once deemed appropriate, should be recorded in the audit.

Keyword Search

Most university websites have a search field where researchers can enter a predetermined list of terms, one at a time, to identify pertinent results. Determining search terms in advance facilitates a systematic online search. These terms are meant to target the existing institutional policies and reporting protocols, direct services, prevention efforts, and awareness campaigns.

Limited Web Presence?

The first phase of the resource audit described throughout this document is conducted online, examining school websites.

If your college or university has a limited web presence, researchers conducting the audit are encouraged to use their judgment in determining avenues which are likely to yield the richest information. The audit may rely more heavily on print materials (e.g., brochures from the rape crisis center, brochures available at health services and the counseling center, etc.) or interviews with key stakeholders to gather information.

Determining if a Search Result is Applicable

When keyword searches return results, researchers may use the inclusionary criteria to determine which of the links are most appropriate to pursue. Following the links, researchers should examine the content of the webpages. If researchers are able to find a specific resource from one of the aforementioned categories (sexual assault policies, investigative and adjudicative protocols, services, or prevention programs) and the result meets the inclusionary criteria, the result should be logged.

Recording Results

When resources that meet the inclusionary criteria are identified, they must be recorded with sufficient detail to inform future steps in the campus climate assessment. A table or spreadsheet can be useful for capturing data. A template for recording results from the resource audit is available for download as a supplement to this chapter. However they record results, researchers should include information that identifies the offices, departments, or contacts associated with each resource. This can help in identifying stakeholders for the next phase of the audit.

Reliability

Measures can and should be taken to ensure the reliability of online search results. Such procedures should ensure that all resources described online are included in the au-
dit that the recorded results meet the predetermined inclusionary criteria.

One method to increase reliability is establishing and implementing a standard procedure for clarifying ambiguous results. At any time throughout the online phase of the resource audit, the research team can come together and review any search results that have been marked as ambiguous or unclear by the researcher conducting the audit. Discussing these results on a case-by-case basis, researchers may reach consensus on whether or not a given resource ought to be included.

To ensure all relevant resources are being identified, other members of the research team may follow the search protocols using a small subset of the original keywords to spot-check results. If numerous discrepancies between researchers’ findings, a process for rectifying results or restarting the online search ought to be specified.

Concluding Phase II

It is important that researchers articulate, prior to conducting the online search, some method for determining when to conclude the online phase of the audit. On some campuses, researchers may decide to end the online search when search terms do not generate new results for a specified amount of time, after searching for a predetermined amount of time, or after researchers have identified a certain number of resources. Researchers should aim to ensure that the audit is capturing all relevant resources available on campus, and that further searching would not produce new results. However, as the audit includes multiple methods of data collection, the online phase ought to yield enough information to allow researchers to move forward with interviews with key stakeholders.

PHASE III: KEY STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

The third phase of the resource audit includes identifying key campus stakeholders and conducting brief, informational interviews with them. The interview phase of the resource audit ensures that researchers are capturing all relevant resources addressing sexual violence and clarifies their understanding about what is available.

Determining Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders are faculty or staff members that have a role in the provision of sexual violence resources by offering a service, participating in sexual assault policy development, prevention programming or sexual assault reporting and adjudicative processes. They are also those faculty and staff that are most likely to come in contact with student survivors of sexual assault due to the nature of their work on campus.

Choosing the most senior stakeholder at each office, such as the director or chair, has many strengths. For instance, it is more likely that the individual will be familiar with university policies and codes of conduct, knowledgeable about many functions of the department, and more familiar overall with the structure of the department or office. However, when necessary, researchers may choose to select less senior interviewees, for example, to include individuals who interact directly with students.

While there are many ways that researchers can compile a list of key stakeholders, they may consider contacting campus administrators for recommendations or request input from faculty and staff. Other methods for identifying stakeholders include:

- Reviewing the list of resources gathered from the online phase of the audit. Researchers can identify potential interviewees within offices or departments addressing sexual violence.
- Soliciting recommendations from the campus climate assessment’s advisory board.
- Using snowball sampling. Interviewees may mention other faculty or staff who might provide researchers with additional information. Members of the research team may also solicit this information in interviews.

Once researchers have a list of stakeholders, requests for interviews can be made. In the interview invitation, researchers can briefly introduce themselves, state the overall goals of the project, and the reasoning behind the interview request. A sample e-mail invitation can be found at the end of this document (Attachment 1).

Interview Procedure

Given that the purpose of the resource audit, as described here, is limited to the identification of available policies, protocols, programs, and services, some of the infor-
The desired goal of the three-phase resource audit is to capture the full range of services that are available on campus. In order to create a comprehensive and thorough listing, it is helpful to keep track of all resources in one document. This also makes it easier to compare these resources to best practices and mandates related to university sexual violence services and protections. With this in mind, researchers may choose to incorporate the information gathered from the interviews into the same document where information from the online phase of the audit was recorded, either adding to the list or expanding existing entries.

Potential Stakeholders:

Depending on your school’s organization, the following individuals may be included as key stakeholders:

- Dean of Students
- Residential Housing Administrator
- Chief of Campus Police or Campus Security
- Chair of Campus Judicial Board
- Director, student health services
- Director, counseling services
- Director, athletic department
- Coordinator, fraternities and sororities
- Director, Victim Assistance Program
- Peer Educator(s)
- Coordinator, Title IX Compliance
- Director, Student Affairs
- Director, Office of Student Conduct
- Director, New Student Orientation

Researchers should determine how best to record the information elicited in the interviews such that it can be efficiently and accurately incorporated into the resource audit. It should be noted, however, that if researchers wish to tape interviews, it will be necessary to acquire approval from the Institutional Review Board and gain the consent of the stakeholders.

Developing Interview Questions

Although identified stakeholders have different roles and responsibilities relating to sexual assault, it is helpful to have a set of common interview questions that can ground each interview. Interview questions can focus on understanding a given service, policy, or prevention program addressing sexual violence and determining how disclosures of sexual violence are handled.

When creating interview questions, it is important to differentiate between process questions (i.e., how do you deal with sexual assault) versus opinion questions (e.g., what works best, where are there gaps in services). The resource audit described in this document is limited to cataloging information regarding sexual assault resources and procedures. Therefore, interview questions are intended to generate information regarding the services, policies, protocols, and prevention programs in which each stakeholder is involved. Interview questions, for the purposes of the resource audit described here, are not intended to capture stakeholders’ opinions regarding sexual assault resources on campus. However, researchers may choose to incorporate stakeholders’ opinions and perceptions of the resources available to help identify gaps. If this approach is selected, researchers must seek appropriate approvals from the Institutional Review Board.

Stakeholders who are not involved in development or creation of sexual assault resources, but rather interact with a particular population of students, such as student athletes or participants in Greek life, can also provide relevant information to researchers regarding the trainings, services, and prevention efforts that are targeted towards certain subgroups. Therefore, it is important that interview questions are able to elicit this information as well.

Consolidating Data

The desired goal of the three-phase resource audit is to capture the full range of services that are available on campus. In order to create a comprehensive and thorough listing, it is helpful to keep track of all resources in one document. This also makes it easier to compare these resources to best practices and mandates related to university sexual violence services and protections. With this in mind, researchers may choose to incorporate the information gathered from the interviews into the same document where information from the online phase of the audit was recorded, either adding to the list or expanding existing entries.
CONCLUSIONS AND NEXT STEPS

Once the interview phase of the audit is concluded and researchers have consolidated the findings, the first step of the campus climate assessment process is complete.

Researchers can now begin to prepare the campus for the climate survey and determine the best use for the results of the resource audit. Once the campus climate survey is complete, along with the results of the resource audit, researchers can begin to compare their own campus resources to identify gaps in their services, policies, and prevention efforts available on campus addressing sexual violence and to develop an action plan that is evidence-based and meets federal mandates.

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Recommended Citation


Notes

4. Although the White House Task Force refers to policies in their first report as “sexual misconduct policies,” for the purposes of this toolkit, any explicitly codified policy that prohibits sexual assault from occurring on campus, at campus sponsored events, or off campus, will be referred to as “sexual assault policies.”

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