

## Tool 6: Focus Group Best Practices

### Set Up

- Focus group guide (see sample BSU focus group guide in the Case Studies section)
- Any PPT and/or handouts for participant to respond to
- Recording devices/capacity
- 1 moderator
- At least 1 notetaker
- Pens
- Notepads
- Food and/or compensation for participants
- Any documents the participants to sign to indicate their presence or receipt of compensation
- Any other handouts for participants, including counseling resources

### Group size

- While 5-8 people is a good size, one should overbook if possible, to account for some people not joining at the last minute
- Overbooking by 3-5 is a good rule, depending on known reliability of invited members

### Moderator campus knowledge

- If possible, the moderator should familiarize themselves with the campus layout and the names of campus buildings and outdoor spaces, including student nicknames for spaces.

### Common challenges

- Keeping the discussion focused on sexual assault risk vs general feelings of being “unsafe.” For example, students may focus on addressing an actual problem with propping open entrances to residence hall buildings, which does genuinely feel unsafe to them, with no evidence that sexual assaults are committed by people who sneak into a building through a propped open door. These concerns are valid, but not for SV prevention in particular.
- Keeping the discussion grounded in known sexual assaults (their own or their fellow students) vs. general cultural narratives about what places feel risky for sexual assault or people they feel are risky. For example, students may focus on restricting access to campus by anyone from outside the campus community, with no evidence that sexual assaults are more likely to be perpetrated by such people.
- Handling student disclosures of SV in a group setting. Facilitators must be skilled to redirect the conversation if a participant discloses SV and provide follow up referral and support resources after the session. Facilitators must also be prepared to provide referrals to SV and mental health support resources for all participants irrespective of SV disclosure.
- The influence of specific well-known sexual assault cases on campus on perceptions of what sexual assault risk “looks like” and where danger lies.

- Student understanding of what constitutes an environmentally-oriented solution. When discussing potential solutions, students are less familiar with (and thus need some more support in understanding) environmental approaches
- Being specific about what SA subtype and or college subpopulation one is discussing, and thus what subtypes and subpopulations are *not* being addressed. When discussing potential solutions, it is important to identify SA subtypes and subpopulations, and recognize that solutions tailored to one subtype/subpopulation may not impact other subtypes/subpopulations. Otherwise, general solutions will tend to favor stranger-rape type of situations (e.g., more lighting).