

Seneca

POLYTECHNIC



SEXUAL VIOLENCE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-23

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Introduction

Seneca Polytechnic is committed to creating a safe, equitable campus community where sexual harassment, violence and abuse are not tolerated.

Supporting survivors, addressing and responding to complaints of sexual violence, raising awareness and educating our community are top priorities.

In 2023, Seneca introduced The Next - A Strategic Plan for Seneca Polytechnic, which charts our priorities for the next three years. The plan includes a resolute commitment to student health and wellness, including:

- **Helping students become engaged citizens** and active participants in building strong, vibrant communities that foster tolerance, diversity in all forms and respect
- **Instilling the principles of reconciliation and inclusion** in our graduates
- Ensuring students have the **mental health, wellness and advising supports they need to succeed**, when they need them
- Promoting experiences that students want and need, on and off campus, to help them **feel connected to the Seneca community**

The Next is prominently reflected in Seneca's sexual violence prevention efforts. Guided by this plan, we are actively integrating the principles of inclusion, respect and empowerment into our programs and services, while fostering a culture of consent, awareness and support within the Seneca community.

This year, with a full, post-pandemic return to campus, Seneca has increased our in-person resources and sexual violence prevention and educational initiatives.

At the same time, we have sustained the robust digital engagement strategy developed in recent years, which serves a diverse, multi-modality audience of students and ensures accessibility and inclusivity for all.

Annual report: 2022-23

Seneca's 2022-23 Sexual Violence annual report provides information for the period of Sept. 1, 2022 through to Aug. 31, 2023, including:

- a year-in-review retrospective of activities and partnerships
- disclosures and investigations of sexual violence involving students and employees, including recent trends
- accommodations provided for students who disclose an act or acts of sexual violence
- educational activities on the prevention of sexual violence
- an inventory of sexual violence prevention education, resources and support services
- a look ahead to the 2023-24 academic year

Year in review

Sexual Violence Task Force

In 2022-23, Seneca's Sexual Violence Task Force underwent a comprehensive review. This process involved an assessment of the Task Force's current structure, intent and goals. This resulted in the establishment of new terms of reference, which provide clear direction for the group's work. The Task Force also refreshed its membership, ensuring a diverse range of perspectives and expertise is guiding its efforts.

Another pivotal outcome of this review was the creation of new working groups, each dedicated to specific areas crucial to addressing sexual violence. These groups include: Prevention & Education for Students, Prevention & Education for Employees, Research & Training and Policy. By identifying four distinct domains, the Task Force has implemented targeted strategies and initiatives that address sexual violence comprehensively, in prevention and response.

The collaborative nature of the Task Force's activities underscores the collective dedication to fostering a safe and respectful environment for all members of the campus community.

Educational and prevention programming

Through a collaborative effort with **Yellow Brick House**, Seneca established the Gender-Based & Sexual Violence (GBSV) Prevention Education Peer ambassadors initiative. Comprised of 10 student-employees, this team uses a peer-to-peer programming model to address topics such as healthy relationships, gender and sexual diversity and fostering a culture of consent on campus.

The GBSV Prevention Education Peer ambassadors have quickly become an integral part of sexual violence programming, engaging in monthly events. Guided by the Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator and the Director, Student Support, the team creates impactful content for social media and facilitates on-campus sexual violence prevention training and events.



The team also created the “Seneca Unmute” podcast, which delves into critical issues surrounding healthy relationships, gender, sexual violence, consent and more. New episodes are released monthly and feature Seneca students.

Beyond their contributions to student life, the GBSV Prevention Education Peer ambassadors gain transferable skills for future employment. This initiative showcases Seneca’s dedication to creating a safe, respectful campus culture, while highlighting the institution’s commitment to embedding career development opportunities in student experiences.

Learning opportunities

Various learning and awareness-raising initiatives were arranged in collaboration with Seneca’s academic faculties and service areas, the Seneca Student Federation and community partners.

Activities that took place this year include:

- safety in online relationships workshops
- in-person and on-demand information sessions during new student orientation
- gender expression and sexual identity events
- a Queer relationship safety seminar

Stepping Up peer program

The Stepping Up program, another collaborative effort with Yellow Brick House, has come to the end of its three-year funding cycle from the Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF). This initiative addressed dating violence and promoted healthy relationships within the Seneca community. Through peer-led workshops and community projects, students gained valuable insights into healthy relationships, sexual diversity and gender-based violence.

Over time, the program evolved with the changing landscape of the pandemic with decreased student engagement and diverse role adaptation.

This year, we hired the GBSV Prevention Education Peer ambassadors to conduct the peer-to-peer education. This model addressed the issue of declining direct engagement observed in previous years and created an opportunity to continue our work after the OTF funding concludes.

Academic year	Direct student engagement with peers (participants)	Indirect engagement with peers (through social media)
2021-22	8	2,858
2022-23	89	3,962

Into 2023-24, Seneca’s Campus Safety Fund will be leveraged to maintain the team of student ambassadors.

New opportunities with Yellow Brick House

Moving forward, Seneca and Yellow Brick House have committed to a continued partnership and ongoing involvement with the Sexual Violence Task Force and student programming. Additionally, Yellow Brick House has applied for new provincial funding for programming designed to prevent gender-based violence through youth dating. Seneca provided references for this application with the goal of having the Stepping Up co-funded partnership continue in future years.

Anti-Human Trafficking Advocacy microcredential

In the fall of 2022, the School of Community Services introduced a microcredential focused on Anti-Human Trafficking Advocacy. This program, delivered online, incorporates a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning over a 10-week period. Its primary objective is to empower individuals to combat trafficking and provide essential support to survivors.

Remarkable success has been achieved by this program in a short time, with 26 students enrolled in the first two intakes. The program will now be expanded and leveraged as training for frontline Seneca employees, such as counsellors and advisers. Offering this resource is an example of Seneca’s ongoing commitment to employee development, ensuring that those who support students are well-prepared with best practices and strong support systems.

Online engagement and social media campaigns

Online engagement provides many platforms for educating the Seneca community and creating awareness through accessible learning opportunities.

In 2022-23, Seneca encouraged participation in sexual violence educational and prevention programming through a range of strategies, including prizes, contests and innovative content. This multi-platform approach led to connections with a diverse audience, meeting students where they are online.

For example, Instagram was an effective channel for engagement, with more than 1,200 active viewers participating in an Instagram Live disclosure training in January 2023.

As well, Facebook, Twitter, Spotify and YouTube were leveraged to run impactful campaigns focused on sexual violence education and awareness raising.

Other examples of social media programming in 2022-23 include:

- videos on "What is consent?" and "How do I get consent?"
- a consent education event with Marlee Liss, a restorative justice advocate, who made history when her sexual assault case became the first in North America to conclude with restorative justice through the courts
- disclosure training live on Instagram
- a conversation with Jungle Flower, a poet whose work focuses on healing from abuse and sexual violence

Events and activities

Seneca conducted a series of in-person workshops and events focused on sexual violence prevention and awareness, with more than 1,450 students participating. Additionally, a survivor-focused support group, specialized programming for 300+ student leaders and virtual events addressing sexual harm and remembrance were organized and delivered.

Events hosted in 2022-23:

- a guest presentation on gender-based violence in academic settings
- Take Back the Night, a virtual event addressing sexual violence in the digital world, with support from various campus partners
- December 6 vigil, commemorating the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women in Canada

Training and courses

Training opportunities were provided to students and employees that focused on understanding sexual violence and consent, becoming familiar with Seneca's Sexual Violence Policy and protocols, supportive and unsupportive responses to disclosures and how to access support and resources.

Specialized, mandatory training was developed for the following groups of students and employees:

- Student Mentoring in Life and Education (SMILE) peer mentors
- Residence Life employees
- Athletes on all varsity teams and student leaders in Athletics & Recreation
- Varsity coaches, assistants and support staff
- Student Services, Student Support, Personal Counselling and Student Advising employees

Ministry of Colleges and Universities Campus Safety Grant



The Campus Safety Grant (CSG), previously known as the Women's Campus Safety Grant, is part of the government's ongoing commitment to support publicly assisted colleges and universities in their efforts to raise awareness and address identified safety related issues. The ministry provides this grant to assist institutions in covering some of the costs of educating and informing students about issues related to campus safety, including sexual and gender-based violence.

The guidelines for this grant note that "publicly assisted colleges and universities, as direct providers of postsecondary education programs and services, are responsible for providing a secure, safe learning and work environment."

Seneca 2022-23 CSG expenditures

Initiatives	Amount	Description
Awareness programs	\$26,234	<p>Campus education: Programs and workshops designed to raise awareness, challenge harmful norms and empower students to prevent and address sexual violence.</p> <p>These efforts educate on topics such as consent, bystander intervention, healthy relationships and survivor support. The CSG grant covers the expenses of all training and education materials, licences, speaker fees, content development and catering.</p>
Student services/ supports	\$127,202	<p>Peer-to-peer programming: Peer-to-peer programming in sexual violence prevention education plays a pivotal role in creating a Seneca community that prioritizes respect, consent and safety. Peer educators effectively engage students, address misconceptions and promote awareness, consent, bystander intervention and healthy relationships.</p> <p>Employee salaries: The CSG funding has also been utilized for salaries and benefits for some of the many employees who support the response and prevention of sexual violence. Educators and counsellors also require specialized training and dedicated resources.</p>
Total:	\$153,436	

Legislation and policy updates

Background:

In March 2015, Ontario launched *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*, followed by *Bill 132, the Sexual Violence and Harassment Action Plan Act*, which amended the *Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act* and the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.

Bill 132 includes requirements of Ontario colleges and universities to provide and implement effective response protocols to address sexual violence, increase supports for survivors and formalize how incidents are addressed.

This bill also includes a requirement to have a standalone sexual violence policy that sets out the process for how incidents and complaints of sexual violence are to be responded to, how students would be accommodated and the requirement for institutions to provide prevention education programming. Postsecondary institutions are also required to review their sexual violence policies every three years (**Sexual Violence Action Plan Act, 2016**).

Legislation:

New provincial legislation, the **Strengthening Postsecondary Institutions and Students Act, 2022**, has provisions on employee sexual misconduct towards students that required updates to Seneca's Sexual Violence Policy.

The legislation says that if an institution determines termination is the appropriate sanction for an employee engaged in sexual misconduct towards a student, the termination will be deemed to be just cause for dismissal; further, the institution cannot rehire an employee terminated for committing sexual misconduct toward a student.

It also includes clauses that prevent the use of non-disclosure agreements in situations where a student brings forward an allegation of sexual misconduct against an employee, unless the non-disclosure agreement is requested by the student.

As well, this act also requires institutions to have employee sexual misconduct policies that, at minimum:

- include the institution's rules with respect to sexual behaviour involving employees towards students
- provide examples of disciplinary measures that may be imposed on employees who contravene the policy

Policy:

To meet the legislative requirements, collaborative efforts were undertaken by representatives from Human Resources, Planning, Security Services and Student Services. This led to updates to the Seneca Violence Policy, which were approved by Seneca’s Board of Governors in June 2023.

Notable changes include the introduction of new definitions pertaining to sexual misconduct and the addition of a dedicated section (Section 8) addressing employee sexual misconduct towards students. Additionally, content directly sourced from Schedule 1 of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities Act was incorporated into the policy updates.

The legislative changes represent a comprehensive approach to tackling the issue of employee sexual misconduct towards students within the postsecondary education sector. The measures underscore the importance of accountability, prevention and transparency, aiming to create a safer and more respectful learning environment for all students.

Seneca’s Sexual Violence Policy will be evaluated in 2023-24 as part of the three-year review cycle.

Reports and disclosures

The following table compares reports and disclosures of sexual violence for 2022-23 with previous academic years. The first full academic year report to the Board of Governors was made in 2018-19.

In 2022-23, there was an increase in reporting for the purpose of initiating a formal or informal complaint for investigation; however, there was only a slight decrease in disclosures to access support, resources, and/or accommodations.

The increase in reporting can also be attributed to improved resources and awareness programming, an increase in on-campus activity and enrolment growth.

Total current and historical disclosures and reports, 2022-23

Metric		2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Metric (a)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of sexual assault	7	11	5	6	12
Metric (b)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of sexual harassment	31	24	16	13	42
Metric (c)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of stalking	3	2	3	4	5
Metric (d)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of indecent exposure	0	1	1	1	1
Metric (e)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of voyeurism	0	1	1	0	0
Metric (f)	Total number of formal complaints/reports of sexual exploitation	2	0	0	0	2
	Total cases for investigation – informal or formal	37 ¹	30 ¹	23 ¹	18 ¹	31 ¹
	Total disclosure ² – historical	24	36	51	66	45
	Total disclosure ² – current	10	16	10	29	28
	Total number of complaints/reports	71	82	84	113	104

¹Total investigations may be less than the sum of the metrics as a single sexual violence investigation may involve one complainant reporting multiple acts of sexual violence. Metrics (a) to (f) are cases where there was an investigation, either formal or informal, by the Student Conduct Office, Human Resources or Security Services.

²Disclosures are defined as a survivor reporting an incident of sexual violence where the survivor does not want to pursue an investigation; however, they do want some form of accommodation.

Providing support

Seneca's commitment to campus safety and addressing sexual violence is demonstrated through the comprehensive range of services and resources available. We offer wrap-around supports to empower students in choosing their own approach to safety, well-being and personal development, including but not limited to:

- access to counsellors specializing in sexual violence
- academic accommodations
- a safety plan
- medical attention through Seneca's Medical Centre or local health services
- information on reporting to police

These supports are accessed through a survivor-driven process and available regardless of whether the survivor opts to make a formal report and/or pursue an internal investigation.



Resources



Seneca SAFE App — connecting users to security and emergency services.



First Peoples@Seneca — providing culturally appropriate services, fostering understanding and engagement with Indigenous students and survivors of sexual violence.



Counselling Services — offering short-term support for a wide range of student challenges, including trauma, mental health and substance abuse and specialized response for sexual assault and advocacy.



Accessibility counsellors — working with students to identify academic accommodations while the Student Conduct Office handles incident reporting and investigations.



Medical Centre — offering various health services, including contraception and STI testing.



Sexual Violence Prevention and Education Coordinator — leading efforts to prevent sexual violence through education and awareness.



Student Support & Intervention specialists — guiding students needing to access sexual violence supports and resources, assuming the roles of both intake coordinators and dedicated case managers, while working collaboratively with all student support teams to ensure comprehensive, trauma-informed response and support.

Priorities for 2023-24

Sexual violence policy, prevention and education

The Sexual Violence Policy will be revised as part of its review cycle. Priorities will be to strengthen our commitment to addressing sexual violence on campus, in alignment with evolving best practices. The review will involve extensive consultations with stakeholders, including students, employees and external experts to ensure a comprehensive and trauma-informed approach to sexual violence prevention and response.

Goals for 2023-24:

- continued collaboration with various community partners, including guest speakers to provide educational programming
- new on-campus education and awareness-raising events and initiatives
- engagement with students and employees online and in person concerning sexual violence prevention education
- expanded educational programming into various course curriculum as requested
- informing updates to the Sexual Violence Policy and associated e-module for students and employees
- enhanced feedback and evaluation processes to prevention education programming

Learn more: [Sexual Assault Information](#) | [Sexual Violence Policy](#)
