

Manifesto for Change

By Third Year Social Service Students:

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We believe...

1. Sexual assault is a serious, complex and widespread problem in our society.
2. It is important to note that due to the emotional vulnerability and societal stigma attached to it, sexual assault is a crime that is vastly underreported.
3. That everyone should have the right to feel safe and to be protected from sexual assault irrespective of their gender.
4. That we should have the ability to openly discuss sexual assault, rather than treating it as a taboo subject.
5. That there needs to be increased awareness at Dawson College about what constitutes sexual assault and clarity about the definition of sexual assault. This is because sexual assault is often considered to be a brutal act or extreme violence, but according to the criminal code, verbal threats may also be considered sexual assault, as well as unwanted touching.
6. That society still needs to overcome a number of long-standing myths about rape and other forms of sexual assault.
7. That no problem can be solved unless truth permeates the effort to solve it.
8. That victims of sexual assault should not be re-victimized in the legal procedures following the report of an incident in which sexual assault has occurred, and that the Canadian legal system requires systemic changes in order to better protect victims throughout the legal process from re-victimization. An increase in educational information would benefit victims of sexual assault by educating them at Dawson College on the legal procedures in hopes to better prepare them on what to expect, and to better inform students on how they can advocate for change.

We want ...

1. To advocate for better awareness among Dawson students of existing laws that address sexual assault and impact students within the walls of Dawson College and in the greater society as well.
2. To see more awareness towards this topic within Dawson, by seeing more education and resources being offered to survivors of sexual assault.
3. To see Dawson College implement and enforce a policy that aims to educate and prevent sexual assault.
4. To have the faculty, staff and students of Dawson College engage in this pursuit for social change through education, starting with our own college community.
5. To have survivors of sexual assault feel supported and validated, not revictimized and discouraged, as is often the case.

We know this to be true that...

1. Sexual abuse is not the victim's fault, and that the victim did not deserve what happened to them.
2. Sexual assault cannot be blamed on what a woman is wearing.
3. When responding to victims of sexual assault as workers or as friends, we need to treat them with openness, genuineness, acceptance, and understanding. We must treat them with respect and with sensitivity to their culture. All of these are key conditions for nurturing recovery from debilitating effects of sexual assault.
4. In work with persons affected by sexual assault, we know that although they may be traumatized it is important to support the person in their own process of making choices, it is possible that they may be too overwhelmed to inform themselves of the laws, rights and resources available to them. Therefore, the role of the ally is to support and guide them in this process.

5. Once the persons affected by sexual assault are informed on their rights and laws available we should empower them to be able to make their own choices as to the next steps to take.
6. Sexual assault does not mean it is the end of the road for the survivor, and that there is help and hope for victims.
7. That there is more to be done to prevent sexual abuse and to help victims overcome their abuse.
8. There is nothing funny about sexual assault and therefore these experiences should not be laughed or joked about.
9. Transformative justice should be an option available to the victims of sexual assault.