



Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Alcohol is Wisconsin's Number One "Date-Rape Drug"

In a study reported on by the Journal of Reproductive Medicine (2000), tests of sexual assault victims indicated that alcohol was present in 63% of victims and other drugs (including "date-rape" drugs) were present in 33% of victims. In a separate study of college students, 35% of men indicated some likelihood that they would commit a violent rape of a woman if they were assured of getting away with it. (1992. Rape in America: A Report to the Nation. Arlington, VA: National Victim Center).

Alcohol and other drugs are often used to cause perspective victims to lose their ability to appraise a situation or a person's conduct. Even if alcohol is not purposefully used to perpetrate a sexual assault, its presence is often taken advantage of. The extensive use of alcohol in our society and the ease at which it can be acquired make it the number one "date-rape" drug.

Despite this, current Wisconsin Statutes, which define degrees at which sexual assault should be charged, clearly exclude alcohol as an intoxicant. Wisconsin Statutes (940.225(2)(cm)) define 2nd degree sexual assault as "sexual intercourse with a person who is under the influence of an intoxicant to a degree which renders that person incapable of appraising the person's conduct..." Statutes (940.225(5)(ai)) also go on to define an intoxicant by indicating, "Intoxicant does not include any alcohol beverage". This is a loophole in the law that needs to be closed.

"It is inappropriate that we acknowledge the intoxicating influence of alcohol in some instances (driving under the influence) and deny its influence in others"

-Kim Simes, WCASA

Previous legislation drafted by Representative Therese Berceau has acknowledged this legal oversight by amending the definition of intoxicant to include alcohol. Unfortunately, this bill died due to the strong lobbying of the alcohol lobby. We are currently working to introduce another amendment addressing this issue.

The impact of a bill if it becomes law is that juries will need to consider the use of alcohol in the perpetration of these crimes and will need to consider it as an intoxicant. By changing the law the burden will no longer be placed on the victim to prove that alcohol is actually an intoxicant. It will be a matter of law that recognizes alcohol as such.

Sexual violence on college and university campuses is occurring at an alarming rate. The most vulnerable population for campus rape is freshman girls during the first few months of school. The majority of these assaults are date/acquaintance rapes perpetrated against women by men. Statistics for Wisconsin released by the Office of Justice Assistance (2003) suggest that 93% of all sexual assaults were perpetrated by someone the victim knew. National statistics indicate that over 27% of college women have been the victim of rape or attempted rape (Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 1987;55(2): 162-170.) If this statistic holds true it means that 1 in 4 women in Wisconsin colleges and universities this year will be raped or the victim of attempted rape. Other studies of interest indicate that 1 out of 15 male college students raped or attempted to rape a woman. (Weitzman, E., DeJong, W., and Finn, P. Alcohol and Acquaintance Rape: Strategies to Protect Yourself and Each Other. U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Only 12% of undergraduate women whose experiences fit the definition of rape, identified themselves as rape victims. (Schwartz, M., Leggett, M. Bad dates or Emotional Trauma – the Aftermath of Campus Sexual Assault). And 84% of men whose actions matched the legal definition of rape, said that what they did was definitely not rape. (Koss, M.P. 1998. Hidden Rape: Incident, Prevalence and Descriptive Characteristics of Sexual Aggression and Victimization in a National Sample of College Students.)

The most important thing for incoming freshman and returning students to understand is that they have the right to say “No”. It is never the victim’s fault no matter what she wore, where she was, whether or not she fought back, or whether or not she was drinking. Perpetrators are 100% responsible for their actions. All college women and men should educate themselves on Wisconsin’s legal definitions of sexual assault and sexual harassment. If you know someone who has been a victim of rape or attempted rape the number one thing you can do to help is believe them. For more information on sexual assault or to contact the nearest rape crisis center please call The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault. (608) 257-1516.

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