**New UC Counselor Dedicated to Helping Sexual Assault Survivors**

**Abby Lewis recently began her new role as a clinical counselor at UC’s Counseling and Psychological Services Center. One of her duties is to specifically work with sexual assault survivors.**

Date: 1/13/2015
By: M.B. Reilly
Phone: (513) 556-1824

The recent release of a [White House report](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/docs/report_0.pdf) and the White House’s ["It's On Us" campaign](http://itsonus.org/), both designed to help protect students from sexual assault, has raised attention to crimes of sexual violence and their consequences to a new level of national prominence.

The University of Cincinnati, along with colleges and universities across the country, is working to find better ways of addressing sexual assaults on campus, such as an emphasis on education and prevention in the form of advocacy, training and resources. These include staff members with a background in prevention and response when it comes to Title IX issues.

* See UC’s [**Title IX website**](http://www.uc.edu/titleix.html).

One of the newest staff members to join UC is Abby Lewis, clinical counselor in UC’s Counseling and Psychological Services ([CAPS](http://www.uc.edu/counseling.html)). She is providing students with general counseling services as well as serving as a 24/7 resource to students in crisis due to sexual harassment, misconduct or assault. All services offered by Lewis and other licensed staff at CAPS are completely confidential. Lewis is the second such therapist to join CAPS. The other is [Anusha Zechella](http://www.uc.edu/profiles/profile.asp?id=20478).

|  |
| --- |
| Headshot of Abby Lewis. |
| **Abby Lewis** |

Said Lewis, “The most important thing I want students I work with to know is that I am here to support them. They’re safe in talking with me. CAPS is a confidential, safe place, and they can speak without fear. They won’t meet with judgment here. It’s a place where they can regain their voice, be heard and seek relief from any pain or trauma.”

* **Reach UC’s Counseling and Psychological Services Center 24/7 by calling 513-556-0648.**

Prior to joining UC this fall, Lewis trained and gained clinical experience in both campus and community settings in work that involved assisting sexual assault survivors as part of her role. Her past service includes work at Ohio State University’s counseling center and at Cincinnati social service agency Talbert House.

“It’s great to work with the college population because so many students are going through growth that is very important but challenging. It’s so rewarding,” Lewis said, adding that at Talbert House, she participated in residential treatment with teenage girls, many of whom has experienced sexual abuse or trauma of some kind.

“For many of the teens, the abuse might have happened years ago, but the impact on them was long lasting. Working with them and seeing results over time has been a life-changing experience. For me, working with abuse and assault survivors has become a calling,” she stated.

**WHAT TO EXPECT WHEN CALLING CAPS**
UC’s Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) has a 24/7 line at 513-556-0648.

If a student calls that line after hours, on weekends or over holidays, the call is transferred to a licensed agency that will take information from the student in order to assess the situation.

Lewis states that the center’s staff realized that a crisis or emergency – whether it’s related to sexual assault or any other issue – doesn’t happen according to a schedule. If a call comes in after hours that is related to sexual misconduct, harassment or assault, either Zechella or Lewis will be contacted and will get back to the student.

She explains, “Depending on the situation, I’ll seek to determine if the student is in a safe locale, do the police need to be called, etc. I’ll also help with the follow up, connections to resources, and of course offer the emotional and psychological support needed.”

**TITLE IX at UC**
This focus on education and prevention is key in combating sexual harassment, misconduct and assault. Education efforts already underway include

* The [#UCItsOnUs campaign](http://www.uc.edu/news/NR.aspx?id=20807).
* Student efforts related to Title IX, such as a [Consent Cultural Campaign](http://www.uc.edu/ucwc/reclaim/consent.html) carried out by students affiliated with DAAPCares, [RECLAIM Peer Advocates](http://www.uc.edu/ucwc/reclaim.html) and Student Government. See Student Body President Christina Beer’s article on the [Consent Culture Campaign](http://www.nationalcampusleaders.org/2014/09/15/consent-a-sober-verbal-ongoing-yes-to-sex/) at UC. To get involved, call 513-556-4401.
* **More than 5,000 incoming first-year, transfer and international students took online training that highlighted the role alcohol often plays in terms of sexual misconduct.** That training also focused on accountability and consequences, laws and policies governing sexual assault. That [online training](http://www.uc.edu/news/nr.aspx?id=20594) will be required of all UC students next year.
* The UC Women’s Center, Office of the Provost, Fellows of the Graduate School and others sponsored a campus visit and address by Lynn Rosenthal, White House advisor on the topic of violence against women on Nov. 21.

The resources include UC’s [Title IX website](http://www.uc.edu/titleix.html) as well as

* UC's [RECLAIM Peer Advocates](http://www.uc.edu/ucwc/reclaim/services.html) deliver support to survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, providing advocacy, awareness and education around these issues. For services contact the Sexual Assault Survivor Advocate at 513-556-4328.
* UC’s Counseling and Psychological Services Center ([CAPS](http://www.uc.edu/counseling.html)) serves as a 24/7 resource to students in crisis due to sexual harassment, misconduct or assault. Reach CAPS 24/7 by calling 513-556-0648.
* [UC Police](http://www.uc.edu/publicsafety/staying-safe/sensitive-crimes.html) have a dedicated victim support team available to assist sexual assault survivors. UCPD can be reached at 513-556-1111.
* In addition to a [new Title IX coordinator](http://www.uc.edu/profiles/profile.asp?id=20791), other recent additions to UC’s campus community also bring Title IX experience that enhances the expertise already available. New members of UC’s community with Title IX experience include Denine Rocco, dean of students; Trent Pinto, director of residence life and education; and incoming chief of UC police and director of public safety [Jason Goodrich](http://www.uc.edu/news/nr.aspx?id=20548).
* By next summer, UC will have plans in place for campus climate surveys, bystander training as well as training for faculty and staff.