

Student Staff Needs and Managing Crises

What do student staff need to effectively manage crises, and to what extent does the Division of Student Affairs support student staff in effectively managing crises?

Methodology

- 251 student staff in roles that respond to various student crises, concerns and other health and wellness issues were invited to participate in a survey.
- An internally-created Qualtrics survey was crafted by 5 department directors to explore students' training needs related to crises or concerns across 4 areas: mental health, alcohol/drugs, sexual and relationship violence and financial/economic stress.
- Additional open-ended questions on the survey collected data regarding how student staff felt about their role related to managing crises and concerns and what types of training, support and supervision would be helpful.
- Quantitative data were analyzed utilizing descriptive statistics and qualitative data were coded using open-ended thematic analysis.

Demographics

- Of 251 student staff invited to participate, 103 (41%) opened the survey and 79 (32%) completed the majority of survey questions with higher response rates among resident advisor and HEAT team staff members.
- Of the survey respondents, 55% were seniors, 27% were juniors, 14% were sophomores and 4% were graduate students.
- Of the survey respondents, 59% were resident advisors (RAs), 9% were HEAT Team members, 13% were Chicago Quarter Mentors (CQMs), 6% were STARS Mentors, 6% were Orientation Staff (OLs) and 6% were student coaches.

Key Findings

- Student staff encounter drug and alcohol concerns, mental health concerns and financial/economic concerns with generally higher levels of frequency than sexual and relationship violence.
- Student staff most frequently encountered alcohol and drug concerns (41%), mental health concerns (39%) and both mental health crises and financial and economic crises (32%) at least once per month.
- Noticeably fewer student staff felt that their training prepared them to respond or assist when students present with financial or economic crises compared to other types of crises or concerns.
- A common theme emerged among student staff, especially RAs and HEAT team members, regarding wanting more opportunities for ongoing training, debriefing, support and supervision.

Plan of Action

- Discuss the results with the Student Affairs Core Function Three Team to inform summer student leader training.
- Meet with professional staff from New Student & Family Engagement and the Office of Multicultural Student Success to discuss these findings and ideas for future trainings.
- Make recommendations for enhancing the student staff training curriculum for student trainings in the summer and fall of 2020.
- Facilitate a review of post-crisis support structures across the Division of Student Affairs with the goal of standardizing procedures for debriefing critical incidents and offering additional support and supervision for student staff.

Student Leaders' Preparation or Comfort Addressing Crises and Concerns

