



# Safety on the College Campus

Starting a new semester of college is a busy and exciting time. Students are worried about how much work they will have for their classes, ordering the books and supplies they need and making a good impression on their professors and peers. There are so many things to deal with and worry about that sometimes one of the most essential aspects of campus life is neglected: **personal safety**.

As much as we would like to think our campus is free from crime, law breakers such as muggers, thieves, drug dealers, and violent aggressors often visit schools to look for victims. Sometimes these threats may come from a fellow student. The importance of personal safety and crime awareness on college campuses must be taken seriously by every student.

## Personal Safety

- Start off by getting to know a new campus, or re-familiarizing yourself with the campus.
- Map out the safest route to and from your classes, and pick a path that is clear and secure.
- Be extra careful at night when a predator could be hiding behind tall trees or lurking in a dark, secluded area.
  - Criminals often look for hiding spots where they can be concealed by tall trees, bushes or other obstacles. It gives them a great advantage over potential victims, because they can see you long before you see them.
  - Sometimes the best self-defense is to simply stay away from areas where danger could be hiding.
  - Stick to routes that are well lit and highly trafficked because law breakers do not want to be noticed by other people who can contact campus security, call the police, and be identified.
  - A potential assailant looks for victims who are alone in areas where no one else can see or hear them.
- While you are getting to know the campus, take some time to learn the locations of the security offices. If you ever are in danger, the campus security officers will be your fastest and best option for assistance.
- Get to know the locations of all the Blue Light Call Boxes on campus, as these phones connect directly to campus security.
- Be certain you know where you can find help, just in case you ever need it.

## Safety In Numbers

- Remember that the old saying about safety in numbers is true. Coordinate your schedule with fellow students so that you walk to and from classes together. This will help to reduce the risk of being targeted by a potential assailant. You won't always be able to walk in a group, but even if you are with one other person it will make you a less likely target.
- Of course there is more to college life than going to classes. You will also socialize with your fellow students, attend school functions and maybe even hold a part time job. The same security tip holds true - when you have other people with you, a criminal will always be hesitant to choose you as their next victim.

## Personal Alarms

Consider carrying a personal alarm with you everywhere they go. These are small, hand-held devices that make a tremendous noise when they are activated. As soon as you turn an alarm on, everyone around will hear it blaring and know that you are in need of help. Since criminals do not want to be seen by others, the moment the alarm sounds their instinct will be to run away. Carrying a personal alarm can give you the extra element you need to stay safe on campus.

## Don't Become A Target

There are many reasons a predator may select a person as their next victim. We may not fully understand how the criminal mind works, but it has been proven that there are certain things predators look for. A law breaker is always watching for people that they can easily victimize. This could be someone who is alone and appears to be timid, or someone who obviously has something they want. Students should do everything they can to avoid being thought of as an easy target.

- When you walk, hold your head up high and look at the people around you.
  - When you walk slowly, slump your shoulders and stare down at your own feet, you give the impression of being a meek person who could be easily intimidated. A criminal prefers people who will not give them any trouble, so if you seem to be the type that won't defend yourself in any way you are more likely to be targeted.
- When you are out in public areas of your campus, never make it obvious that you have money or expensive jewelry on your person. A thief will see that you have something they want, and you could be accosted.
  - During a mugging, the best case scenario may be that you just have something taken from you, but you never know when an incident could turn violent. Would you be able to defend yourself?

**If you have been robbed or assaulted, seek help immediately.** Contact security and the police, and get medical attention if you have been hurt. Cooperate with the police. Do your best to give a description. Remember- someone has done this to you, they very well might do it to someone else.

## Self Defense Classes

- College students tend to have very busy schedules full of classes, homework and studying, but it's always a good idea to include a course on self-defense.
- You will be taught how to temporarily disable an attacker, and learn basic moves that will catch an assailant by surprise and help you get away safely.
- Many of these classes also teach you how to use self-defense weapons. Non-lethal devices that are designed for your personal protection, such as pepper spray or stun guns, may seem easy to operate, but unless you are very familiar with them you might not have the presence of mind to utilize them properly if you are assaulted.
- Self-defense training can be very beneficial, but remember that it may not always be wise to attempt to defend yourself. If a criminal has a gun or another lethal weapon, the best thing to do is cooperate. Unless your life is being threatened, you will not want to make the situation worse by provoking your aggressor. It's good to know

some martial arts techniques, but in some circumstances trying to use them may actually put your life more at risk.

- You can help ensure your personal security on campus by taking every step possible to **not** look like a good target to criminals, and by learning how to protect yourself when it is necessary.
- There are things to do even if you haven't had any sort of "formal" training as well. If you are attacked, use anything you can as a weapon. If you do not have something like pepper spray or a stun device you can get to, pick up a large rock, a glass bottle or whatever is accessible that you can use against your assailant. Using an item as a weapon can temporarily halt the attacker, and give you time to get away. Try as best you can to keep as clear a head as possible during an assault, and always look for an escape route.

## **Dorm Safety**

Hawai'i Community College **does not** have dormitories or offer on-campus residence halls. If you **transfer** to a college or university with on-campus living, dorm life can be a fun and rewarding experience. You will meet people with varied backgrounds from all over the United States and beyond. College students who live on campus are thrown into a brand new and unfamiliar world, but they can work together to form a functioning society and, most importantly, keep everyone safe.

### **Safety Basics:**

- Get to know the people in your dormitory.
- Start your own Crime Watch Group to subvert crime within the dorm. Work together to watch for people who should not be in your building, people who are loitering and acting suspiciously. When people are watching out for each other, it helps to keep everyone safe.
- Have everyone write down a list of emergency contact numbers, such as the home or cell phone number of a parent or trusted relative. Keep the list of numbers in a safe place where it can be easily found if needed (or keep several copies in several locations).
- Keep the doors leading into your dormitory locked at all times. Ask campus security to check the doors and survey your building every night.
- Contact Campus Security when you notice someone exhibiting suspicious behavior.

### **Protect your valuables:**

- If your room does not have a good lock and deadbolt, find out how you can have them installed.
- Keep your windows locked at all times if you are on the first or second floor
- Make sure the room is completely secure when you go out.
  - If a thief were to get into your building, they would look for a door that is unlocked for easy access.
  - A criminal won't want to try to break into a dorm room because there are too many people around who could see them.
- If you ever lose your key, get the room locks changed immediately. Don't risk allowing someone easy access to your personal belongings.

### **Fire basics:**

- Not every danger on a college campus comes from other people. Students must also be aware of the potential threat of a fire within their dorm.
  - You can help avoid a tragedy by not smoking in your room.
  - Make sure you don't have too many things plugged into a single outlet.
  - Never leave a hot plate or other cooking appliance unattended.

- o Place a smoke detector in your room if there isn't one already, so you will be alerted immediately if a fire does start.
- Learn where all the emergency exits are just in case you ever need to get out of the building quickly.
- Keep the hallways clean and free of debris. Having boxes, furniture and other items in the hall is usually against local fire code and should be enforced by the college's Environmental Health and Safety Officer (EHSO).
- If there are obstacles in the way, contact your college's EHSO or Facilities Maintenance Officer to ensure the fire codes are enforced.

## Know When To Back Down

While learning self defense methods can be helpful so you feel confident fighting back, sometimes it is necessary to stand down and do what the criminal is telling you. They may have a gun, knife or other dangerous weapon. If so, the best thing you can do is cooperate. Give a mugger your wallet or other valuables, or let a thief take your purse if they are armed. It is better to lose your possessions than to risk great harm or even death. Even if you are uncertain if an assailant has a weapon, if there is a possibility, then your best bet may very well be to play it safe.

## Protect Your Possessions

When you live in a dorm you usually do not have a lot of expensive personal items in the room. However you may have cash, jewelry, iPods, or other valuables. It is a great idea to keep these smaller items hidden and secure at all times to avoid theft. A diversion safe is a good and inexpensive solution. The safes are created to look like other household items such as a soda can or shaving cream canister. A thief will usually only remain inside a dorm room for a few minutes, so the better you have your valuables hidden, the more likely it is they will not be stolen.

It is even more important to protect yourself and assure your own safety. There are many items you can invest in to help with this:

## Protect Your Identity

Identity theft is on the rise. Crooks can take your private information, pretend to be you and make expensive purchases on your credit cards. After a criminal has your information, they can do a tremendous amount of damage to you financially. It is difficult to get the mess they make straightened out, so it is always better to be proactive and protect yourself against identity theft.

## Personal Information

- Never give out your social security number to other students, or to anyone on campus who claims to need it.
- Do not carry your social security card in your wallet. If you lose the wallet or it is stolen, whoever has it will then have it.
- Avoid giving out personal information over the phone or in person. Someone may be scamming you, or listening in to your conversation.
- Only give out your information in a private school office, where you are certain that it is safe to do so.

- Shred all of your personal mail and other documents that have private information on them. Tearing a document in half is not enough. Anyone could tape it back together and have access to your data.
- If you do not receive a regular credit card bill or bank statement, check into it. Make sure the mail is just late, and that nobody has stolen it. These items can offer a criminal a lot of personal information about you. Always review your statements, and if anything seems wrong, contact the bank or card company immediately to discuss it.
- Go to your bank to pick up checks instead of having them sent in the mail. Don't give a thief the opportunity to end up with your checkbook.
- Do not have your social security number or driver's license number printed on your checks. If necessary, you can include those numbers on a check you are writing, but they should not be listed on blank checks.