

Program aids rape victims

Health center pays for tests

By Jennifer McClure
Staff Reporter

To provide better emotional support for rape victims, the University Health Center has begun a program to pay for their tests, a health center official said.

Dr. Kunle Ojikutu, director of the health center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, said the policy went into effect this semester.

The average cost for the tests is more than \$200, Ojikutu said.

The health center is not equipped to administer tests needed to prove a student was raped, he said. Instead, students are directed to a local hospital for the tests.

With the new program, the health center will pay for tests administered at local hospitals, he said.

Linda Rizjis, director of nursing at the health center, said center officials weren't comfortable administering the tests.

"We are not equipped to do a thorough job, and we don't have enough (victims) per year to remember the procedure," Rizjis said.

Administering tests for sexual

assault also creates staffing problems because a doctor and a nurse are needed for the procedure, she said.

The Association of Students at the University of Nebraska Human Rights Committee suggested at the beginning of the year that the health center pay for the tests, Ojikutu said.

"The issue came about with us not doing the test and (it) costing the student more money when they went somewhere else to get it done," he said.

Ojikutu met with UNL's student health insurance company earlier this year, he said, and the company said it would forgo the deductibles in cases of sexual assault.

"Then we ran into the problem that not everyone had student health insurance," he said. "I had a meeting with Vice Chancellor (James) Griesen and key personnel within the health center. We decided to do it."

The health center now pays for the tests whether students carry student health insurance or not, Ojikutu said. The health center also pays for the tests regardless of where the rape occurred, he said.

Rizjis said she recommended that rape victims be tested at Lincoln General Hospital because of its closer location, experience with rape cases and on-duty policeman.

Ojikutu said the health center preferred that students called the center to inform them of the assault before going to another hospital for treatment, but the cost still would be covered if they did not call.

Additional tests also would be covered if the student came to the health center a week later, he said.

If counseling was needed, Ojikutu said, the first three sessions would be free. The rest would be determined on a case-by-case basis.

"It covers everything," he said. "We want to be very liberal."

Although the health center already pays for the tests, Ojikutu said, officials still must put everything in writing.

"We will try to put it into the semester bulletin," he said. "We need to get things into motion."

Ojikutu said he also would study the impact of the cost on the health center's budget.

"I will not allow it to be affected by budget cuts," he said. "If we have to cut other things, we'll do it, but not this one."

New bill may define, outlaw act of stalking

By Sean Green
Senior Reporter

The Nebraska Legislature brought the state one step closer Tuesday to being one of only three states with laws defining and providing penalties for stalking.

In a 32-0 vote, state senators advanced to select file LB1098, which would make the act of stalking a criminal offense.

Sen. Jennie Robak of Columbus, one of the bill's co-sponsors, said victims of stalkers now had no recourse because no laws existed against the act.

Stalkers are defined in the bill as those who "harass or willfully, maliciously and repeatedly follow another person or make a credible threat against that person."

Robak said the bill, if made law, would be an answer to the prayers of victims and law enforcement officers who had no legal recourse against stalkers.

"This bill is not only needed for the protection of victims, it is an answer for the prayers of policemen who have been unable to help their

victims," she said.

California and Virginia are the only states that have laws against stalking, but Robak said members of the Colorado Legislature had requested a copy of LB1098 and were considering a similar law.

LB1098 would make stalking a Class I misdemeanor for the first offense and a Class IV felony for the second offense, including a penalty of up to five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine.

The only recourse victims of stalkers now have is to get a restraining order on the stalker, Robak said. But because stalking is not illegal, she said, law enforcement officials have their hands tied and can do little to stop the stalker.

Robak also said it was important not to assume that all stalkers were men.

While complaints about stalkers seem to come from women more often than men, she said, some women follow, harass and threaten men.

Robak said that sometimes people were unconcerned about the crime of stalking because it did not always involve a physical attack.



ASUN plans to vote on parking fee, taxes

By Kara Morrison
Staff Reporter

ASUN will vote tonight on an ASUN/Academic Senate parking-safety proposal and a government bill opposing a proposed state cigarette-tax increase.

The Association of Students of the University of Nebraska and the Academic Senate on Tuesday outlined an alternative to the Parking Advisory Board's proposed \$20 parking-permit fee increase.

According to the proposal, the university would pay for parking-safety improvements by increasing parking-permit prices \$2 to \$5 for the next four years. Those who buy more expensive permits would pay the largest increase.

The other government bill to be voted on by the senate opposes a Nebraska environmental-protection group's proposal to add a 25-cent tax to cigarette purchases.

ASUN President Andrew Sigerson said that, according to the Clean Environment Committee, \$33 million in revenue would be raised from the proposed cigarette tax, most of

which would go toward environmental projects such as tree-planting and recycling.

About \$6 million of the revenue also would go toward cancer research and educational programs to discourage smoking, Sigerson said.

UNL officials said Monday they were concerned that the additional tax would jeopardize cigarette-tax funding used by the university for capital construction.

Sigerson said he agreed that the Legislature would be hesitant to further increase the cigarette tax for future university projects if the 25-cent tax was voted in.

University projects such as the Bob Devaney Sports Center and the new George W. Beadle Center were paid for with cigarette-tax revenue, he said.

Also, Sigerson said the proposed tax increase was significant enough that it could erode the cigarette-tax base because "people could potentially stop buying the product rather than paying the tax."

Although the university could receive funding for research from the proposed tax increase, Sigerson said it was more likely that most of the funding would be used to discourage people from starting to smoke.

The ASUN bill also asks the NU Board of Regents to reject the cigarette-tax proposal.

Multicultural

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The legislators unanimously approved the bill's reconsideration, and later passed LB922 and an additional appropriations bill, which would supply more than \$80,000 for the next school year to implement LB922, and more than \$70,000 for the following two years.

Chambers said he was glad the bill had passed through the Legislature.

"We represent the public, and it shows by recognizing the need of schools to teach about all the groups within the state, that we want to eradicate racism, bigotry . . . and all the things that build up the walls between us," he said.

LB922 and LB922A will be given to the governor to sign within the next five days.

If the governor signs the bills or takes no action, they will become law.

If vetoed, the bills would be returned to the Legislature, which could override the veto. An override would require 30 votes, or three-fifths of the full Legislature.

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