

Crisis center director says UNL police isolated

By ERIN GIBSON
Senior Reporter

The University Police Department needs more training to handle cases of domestic violence and sexual assault, a forum participant told the Police Advisory Committee Tuesday.

Marcee Metzger, director of the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center, told committee members at an open meeting that university police are too isolated from the community in dealing with assault.

Domestic violence on the campus and in Lincoln is increasing, she said, and victims report crimes more often than before.

But the UNL police department receives few such reports, she said. According to the department, two rapes were reported on campus last year.

"I don't think the numbers reported to the UNL police department are reflective of what's going on in the community," Metzger said.

The campus police do a good job of community-based policing, she said, but officers need extra training to effectively deal with the sensitive area of domestic and sexual assault.

UNL Police Chief Ken Cauble said two members of his department — the victim services coordinator and a sergeant — will attend a course this June that will further train them to handle cases of domestic violence and sexual

assault.

The course also will certify the officers as instructors capable of training others in handling such cases. They will then train other university police officers, Cauble said.

Metzger said university police officers also should work to communicate more effectively with victim-advocacy committees in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

"(UNL police) don't always have the best information because they're isolated," she said.

Such communication could improve how the department hears about unreported assaults and could help the department better meet the needs of victims, Metzger said.

Cauble said the victim services coordinator

attends community Domestic Violence Coalition meetings for this purpose, but she was open to other means of improving communication.

Judith Kriss, director of UNL's Women's Center, said the Rape/Spouse Abuse Crisis Center does not currently refer university victims to the university's victim counseling services.

Dave Morgan, advisory committee member, said the university may need a 24-hour crisis line to better publicize its services to meet the university's need and increase the percentage of assaults reported.

Those at the meeting agreed that the university may be better equipped now to handle follow-up care for victims than to provide after-hours crisis counseling.

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