



MEMBERSHIP ADVISORY - RE: DSU SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PHONE LINE

BACKGROUND

The DSU Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line is a student-led support project for survivors of sexual violence. Initial project development was undertaken in the 2014-15 academic year, and the DSU allocated funding to hire a full-time coordinator and get the phone line running as a pilot project in time for O-Week 2015. While the phone line was hugely successful, adequate funding could not be secured to continue the service. On November 3 at midnight, service ended on the DSU Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line after two additional months of operation during the Fall 2016 semester.

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PHONE LINE RESULTS AND FEEDBACK

The phone line was initially envisioned as a supplementary, short-term service designed to draw attention to major capacity gaps in survivor support at Dalhousie University. While the University claims that Counselling Services and Security are sufficiently equipped to deal with survivor support on campus, reports of sexual violence to the phone line suggest otherwise:

- 17 conversations were had via the Phone Line from September 2015 - April 2016. During the same time period, five incidents of sexualized violence on campus were reported to Dal Security.
- Nine conversations were had via the Phone Line from September 2016 - November 2016. During the same time period, two incidents of sexualized violence on campus were reported to Dal Security.
- The MOU talks about combating sexualized violence but doesn't go far enough. The MOU refers to universities having sexual assault policies but doesn't go as far as the Safer Universities and Colleges Act or the Sexual Violence Action Plan, legislation introduced by both opposition parties. The MOU is one of the only documents students have to hold our university and government accountable, but still does not provide any formal recourse when the government or university doesn't live up to their side of the bargain.

While Dalhousie refuses to publicly release the full number of disclosures of sexual violence university-wide, these figures highlight the fact that Dal students are seeking assistance from service providers outside of the University's official sexual violence response apparatus.

In addition to providing crisis counselling and referrals, the DSU Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line built harassment and violence-response capacity on-campus among students from diverse backgrounds.

- 100+ people were trained in active listening, referrals, and responding to sexualized violence.
- 85 people signed up to attend a potential future Phone Line training, expressing interest in active listening and responding to sexualized violence.
- 200 students and community members sent letters of support about the Phone Line to Dalhousie Administration during the Summer when the future of the Phone Line remained uncertain.

While rape culture is endemic at Dalhousie, the phone line and other student-led initiatives to support survivors of sexual violence and harassment have helped to galvanize our community's commitment to making Dal a safe place for everyone to study and work.



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“ The DSU is committed to establishing a sustainable long-term support service ”

FUTURE SURVIVOR SUPPORT

In September and October 2016, the DSU held consultation and strategy sessions with students to share information about the phone line and to find out more about what students needed going forward. Students voiced frustration with inadequate funding for survivor support services on campus and made it clear that the DSU should not be alone in efforts to provide timely and appropriate access to crisis counselling — the Dalhousie administration should join with us as a partner in working to end sexual violence and harassment on campus and in our wider community. The Phone Line was not an end goal in itself, but a crucial step towards fostering a safer campus where students and survivors feel they have someone they can trust. While the Phone Line has come to an end for now, the DSU is committed to establishing a sustainable long-term support service, and will be making a proposal to this effect at the beginning of the Winter Semester.

While the DSU's plan for addressing sexual violence and harassment on campus will be rolled out in a few weeks, we'd like to announce that the first phase of our long-term strategy will involve a peer-support service scheduled to launch in January, along with two full days of training. This active-listening service will be aimed at creating an in-person safer space to discuss sexual assault and harassment, where students can receive referrals to on- and off-campus resources. It's important to note that the active-listening service should not be interpreted as a crisis service, but as part of the necessary groundwork as we lay the foundation for a more sustainable survivor support programme.

If you are interested in attending the training sessions for this support service, please visit:
dsu.ca/survivorsupportvolunteer to register.

Training will take place on January 14th and 15th.



SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PHONE LINE HISTORY

JULY 2014

Members of Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Project (NSPIRG), The South House, The Equity and Accessibility Office (E&A) and The Loaded Ladle - which are all student groups under the Dalhousie Student Union (DSU), identify a lack of resources and information for survivors and new students in the upcoming O-Week. This group identifies a phone line as the best way to offer support to new and survivors on campus especially because there is no comparable service in the province. After weeks of preparing to launch a phone line the group realizes there is not enough capacity or resources to offer a phone line that September and opted to have societies staff get first responder training from the Avalon Sexual Assault Centre.

OCTOBER 2014

A panel on rape culture on campus is held through the (E&A) Office to continue conversations about sexualized violence and consent on campus.

DECEMBER 2014

Misogyny within the Dalhousie School of Dentistry makes local national news headlines.

JANUARY 2015

Students, led by the DSU and the South House, and community members, and Avalon Sexual Assault Centre, organize a series of rallies and protests against misogyny within the School of Dentistry and the way that Dalhousie University handled these incidences.

JANUARY 8, 2015

The University tasks an external reviewer--Constance Backhouse--with creating a report and timeline on everything that transpired within the faculty of Dentistry and the response that came from Dal community.

JANUARY 15, 2015

Forum on Misogyny: Transforming our campus and strengthening our community is put on by the DSU and the Dalhousie Gender and Women's Studies Program and attracts over 1000 students and community members. Speakers include students, faculty, staff, and community members. This was to discuss how our campus could come together to support people in our community harmed by discrimination, harassment, and oppressive behaviour.

FEBRUARY 2015

The DSU forms the Sexualized Violence Working Group, under which a phone line sub committee is formed. The membership of the committee is made up of students, society staff and DSU staff people.

MARCH 5, 2015

Dalhousie University releases [Belong: Supporting an inclusive and diverse university](#).

MARCH 5, 2015

Forum on Sexism and Racism takes place to come to a better understanding of the relations between forms of oppression in different personal, social and political contexts. This is in response to the racism also present within the Dalhousie School of Dentistry and how it intersects with sexism.



SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PHONE LINE HISTORY

JUNE 2015

Nova Scotia government releases [Sexual Violence Strategy](#). The report highlights lack of 24 hour services available in Nova Scotia.

JULY 2, 2015

The External Dentistry Task Force releases its report: [Misogyny, Sexism and Homophobia in Dalhousie University Faculty of Dentistry](#). Report highlights the need for Dalhousie to look to internal resources such as the South House.

JULY 2015

The DSU allocates \$6000 to the Phone Line Pilot Project along with space and full time staff support - allowing the first Phone Line Coordinator to be hired.

AUGUST 17, 2015

A call out for volunteers for the Phone Line is sent out. Over 70 people apply to volunteer. Volunteers are required to do both in-person and online training and do some practice calls to ensure they are fit to work the line.

AUGUST 20, 2015

Letters requesting support for the phone line are sent out to community groups, faculties and student societies.

AUGUST 29/30, 2015

In-person training is held for new phone line volunteers. Volunteers are trained in active listening, cultural competency, self care, and both campus and local services and resources.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2015

The phone line received additional financial support from The Faculty of Dentistry, The Faculty of Health Professions, The Loaded Ladle, The South House, OUTLaw, Dalhousie Feminist Legal Association (DFLA), Nova Scotia Public Interest Research Group (NSPIRG), Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), The Service Employees International Union (SEIU), and The Dalhousie School of Social Work.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2015

Promotional material for the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line is put into the 2000 Orientation Week kits made for incoming first year students.

SEPTEMBER 6, 2015

The Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line pilot project is launched AND receives its first call. The phone line is scheduled to be a six week pilot project that would end October 16, 2015.

SEPTEMBER 22, 2015

Backhouse and Beyond: A Forum on Rape Culture and the Future of Dal. This was a follow-up lecture put on by the DSU and the Program in Gender and Women's studies, with the aim of providing and opportunity for the Dalhousie community to discuss the work that has been done to address rape culture, misogyny and other forms of discrimination on campus.

OCTOBER 9, 2015

Phone line announces it will extend service until November 16, 2015, four weeks after the original deadline, with the help of the organizations, unions and faculties that donated money.



SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PHONE LINE HISTORY

OCTOBER 14, 2015

A funding proposal to extend the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line pilot project to the end of the academic year is presented to Dalhousie University President Richard Florizone. The proposal sought \$53,415 in funding to allow for a second staff person and the ability to look into service expansion.

OCTOBER 26, 2015

The Phone Line Coordinators contract comes to an end, after being extended two weeks past its original end date. Moving forward, the coordinator's duties are filled interim by two part-time staff and a job posting is circulated for a new Phone Line Coordinator for the winter semester.

NOVEMBER 19, 2015

The University grants \$29,000 to extend the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line pilot project to the end of the academic year. A memorandum of understanding is signed between the DSU and the University that recognizes the university's financial contribution as representing 50% of the annual cost of the phone line. The MOU also states that the funding agreement is for one year only, that there will be a third party review at the end of the project, the DSU must clear all communications with the university and is liable for issues related to the phone line.

DECEMBER 2015

A call out for new phone line volunteers goes out and 120 people complete registration form.

DECEMBER 20, 2015

The Phone Line goes off line for winter break.

JANUARY 4, 2016

The Phone Line re-launches for winter semester and the newly hired Phone Line Coordinator starts their contract.

JANUARY 23/24, 2016

A second phone line training is held and 60 new volunteers are trained.

FEBRUARY 26, 2016

A callout is made for more student volunteers to sit on the newly formed Phone Line Committee - relieving DSU and society staff members of much of the organizing work, and moving toward a more representative model of organizing that prioritizes the experiences of marginalized people.

APRIL 23, 2016

The Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line Pilot Project ends it received 50 calls, there were 17 conversations had. During this academic year, Dalhousie Security had 5 reports of sexualized violence.

MAY 2016

The Phone Line Coordinators contract is extended until July to account for creating documents to archive the happenings of the Phone Line in full detail. In case the Phone Line would not get off the ground for Fall 2016, there would be documents outlining how to start and operate a Phone Line. This contract is later extended until August 12th to account for setting up potential Phone Line training for August 2016. The Phone Line Review is disseminated to Dalhousie and the DSU.



SEXUAL ASSAULT AND HARASSMENT PHONE LINE HISTORY

JULY 12, 2016

A presentation about the Phone Line is given to invested parties by the reviewer.

JULY 2016

DSU requests meeting to discuss phone line with the university. The DSU is told that the Vice Provost, Arig el Shaibah is empowered to make a decision on behalf of the University about funding the Phone Line.

JULY 22, 2016

The DSU publishes an [open letter](#) calling on the University to fund the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line. Over 200 people signed onto the letter, and a [video](#) recording of the letter being read received more than 15,000 views. Students and community members added [their voices](#), raising their concerns to Dalhousie through email submissions to President Florizone.

JULY 27, 2016

A funding proposal to relaunch the Phone Line in September 2016 is presented to Dalhousie Vice-Provost of Student Affairs, Arig al Shaibah. Arig comes to the meeting alone, and 45 minutes late.

AUGUST 9, 2016

Vice-Provost of Student Affairs, Arig el Shaibah responds to the funding proposal, and offers \$15,000 to contribute to the Phone Line from Dalhousie. This is conditional on the DSU crediting Dalhousie \$7500, and putting forward the additional \$22,500 needed to run the Phone Line in full for the full academic year.

AUGUST 19, 2016

The DSU declines Dalhousie's inadequate funding, noting that Dalhousie doesn't support student run services around Sexualized Violence, and that the DSU will run an in-house condensed version of the Phone Line to support students who are survivors.

AUGUST 28, 2016

The DSU puts promotional materials about consent and the Phone Line in all 2000 Orientation Week kits for incoming first year students.

SEPTEMBER 1, 2016

The DSU re-hires the Phone Line Coordinator as a part time staff person to oversee volunteer coordination and day-to-day maintenance of the Phone Line.

SEPTEMBER 3, 2016

The Phone Line launches again, this time lasting from September 3rd to November 3rd to cover the critical first part of the academic year, wherein majority of sexual assaults on campus take place.

NOVEMBER 3, 2016

The second run of the Sexual Assault and Harassment Phone Line ends. The phone line facilitated nine conversations. So far during the 2016-17 academic year, Dalhousie Security has received two reports of sexualized violence.

DECEMBER 4, 2016

DSU announces [Active Listening Training](#).