

## State Laws: Consent - California

### California Law

#### Consent and the Law

Under California law defining sex offenses, consent means an informed, voluntary, and affirmative decision to engage in sexual activity, which cannot be given by someone who is:

- unconscious, asleep, or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol
- unable to understand the nature of the activity due to a mental, physical, or developmental disability
- forced, threatened, or coerced
- underage (generally, the age of consent is 18)

In addition, asking the perpetrator to use a condom or other birth control device does not imply consent.

#### Affirmative Consent

In campus disciplinary proceedings involving sexual assault, California colleges and universities\* must use an "affirmative consent" standard to decide responsibility, which is defined as an affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. In applying this standard, California law provides these guidelines:

- consent may be withdrawn at any time
- the other person's silence or lack of protest or resistance does not show consent
- a current dating relationship or past sexual relations with the accused does not necessarily mean consent was given

\*Applies to schools that receive state funds for student financial aid.

In addition, the accused cannot avoid responsibility for failing to obtain consent if the accused:

- was intoxicated or acted recklessly
- did not take steps to get the other person's consent

- knew or should have known that the complainant was:
  - asleep or unconscious
  - incapacitated due to drugs, alcohol, or medication
  - unable to communicate due to a mental or physical condition

## Statutes

### California Law

#### Consent Statutes

#### California Codes

##### Penal Code

##### Part 1. Of Crimes and Punishments

##### Title 9. Of Crimes Against the Person Involving Sexual Assault, and Crimes Against Public Decency and Good Morals

##### Chapter 1. Rape, Abduction, Carnal Abuse of Children, and Seduction

#### Section 261. Rape (Sexual Intercourse)

(a) Rape is an act of sexual intercourse accomplished with a person not the spouse of the perpetrator, under any of the following circumstances:

(1) Where a person is incapable, because of a mental disorder or developmental or physical disability, of giving legal consent, and this is known or reasonably should be known to the person committing the act ... *[content omitted for clarity]*.

(2) Where it is accomplished against a person's will by means of force, violence, duress, menace, or fear of immediate and unlawful bodily injury on the person or another.

(3) Where a person is prevented from resisting by any intoxicating or anesthetic substance, or any controlled substance, and this condition was known, or reasonably should have been known by the accused.

(4) Where a person is at the time unconscious of the nature of the act, and this is known to the accused. As used in this paragraph, "unconscious of the nature of the act" means incapable of resisting because the victim meets any of the following conditions:

(A) Was unconscious or asleep.

(B) Was not aware, knowing, perceiving, or cognizant that the act occurred.

(C) Was not aware, knowing, perceiving, or cognizant of the essential characteristics of the act due to the perpetrator's fraud in fact.

(D) Was not aware, knowing, perceiving, or cognizant of the essential characteristics of the act due to the perpetrator's fraudulent representation that the sexual penetration served a professional purpose when it served no professional purpose.

(5) Where a person submits under the belief that the person committing the act is someone known to the victim other than the accused, and this belief is induced by any artifice, pretense, or concealment practiced by the accused, with intent to induce the belief.

(6) Where the act is accomplished against the victim's will by threatening to retaliate in the future against the victim or any other person, and there is a reasonable possibility that the perpetrator will execute the threat. As used in this paragraph, "threatening to retaliate" means a threat to kidnap or falsely imprison, or to inflict extreme pain, serious bodily injury, or death.

(7) Where the act is accomplished against the victim's will by threatening to use the authority of a public official to incarcerate, arrest, or deport the victim or another, and the victim has a reasonable belief that the perpetrator is a public official. As used in this paragraph, "public official" means a person employed by a governmental agency who has the authority, as part of that position, to incarcerate, arrest, or deport another. The perpetrator does not actually have to be a public official.

(b) As used in this section, "duress" means a direct or implied threat of force, violence, danger, or retribution sufficient to coerce a reasonable person of ordinary susceptibilities to perform an act which otherwise would not have been performed, or acquiesce in an act to which one otherwise would not have submitted. The total circumstances, including the age of the victim, and his or her relationship to the defendant, are factors to consider in appraising the existence of duress.

(c) As used in this section, "menace" means any threat, declaration, or act which shows an intention to inflict an injury upon another.

#### Section 261.5. Statutory Rape

(a) Unlawful sexual intercourse is an act of sexual intercourse accomplished with a person who is not the spouse of the perpetrator, if the person is a minor. For the purposes of this section, a "minor" is a person under the age of 18 years and an "adult" is a person who is at least 18 years of age.

(b) Any person who engages in an act of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor who is not more than three years older or three years younger than the perpetrator, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

(c) Any person who engages in an act of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor who is more than three years younger than the perpetrator is guilty of either a misdemeanor or a felony ... *[content omitted for clarity]*.

(d) Any person 21 years of age or older who engages in an act of unlawful sexual intercourse with a minor who is under 16 years of age is guilty of either a misdemeanor or a felony ... *[content omitted for clarity]*.

.... *[Content omitted for clarity.]*

#### 261.6. "Consent"; Effect of current or previous relationship

In [rape] prosecutions ... *[content omitted for clarity]* in which consent is at issue, "consent" shall be defined to mean positive cooperation in act or attitude pursuant to an exercise of free will. The person must act freely and voluntarily and have knowledge of the nature of the act or transaction involved.

A current or previous dating or marital relationship shall not be sufficient to constitute consent where consent is at issue in a [rape] prosecution ... *[content omitted for clarity]*.

.... *[Content omitted for clarity.]*

#### Section 261.7. "Consent"; Communication to use condom or other birth control device

In [rape] prosecutions ... *[content omitted for clarity]* in which consent is at issue, evidence that the victim suggested, requested, or otherwise communicated to the defendant that the defendant use a condom or other birth control device, without additional evidence of consent, is not sufficient to constitute consent.

#### Section 266c. Inducing consent to sexual act by fraud or fear

Every person who induces any other person to engage in sexual intercourse, sexual penetration, oral copulation, or sodomy when his or her consent is procured by false or

fraudulent representation or pretense that is made with the intent to create fear, and which does induce fear, and that would cause a reasonable person in like circumstances to act contrary to the person's free will, and does cause the victim to so act, is punishable by imprisonment in a county jail for not more than one year or in the state prison for two, three, or four years.

As used in this section, "fear" means the fear of physical injury or death to the person or to any relative of the person or member of the person's family.

## California Law

### Affirmative Consent Statute

California Education Code  
Title 3. Postsecondary Education  
Division 5. General Provisions  
Part 40. Donahoe Higher Education Act  
Chapter 15.5 Student Safety

Section 67386. Adoption of policies, protocols, and programs regarding sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking

(a) In order to receive state funds for student financial assistance, the governing board of each community college district, the Trustees of the California State University, the Regents of the University of California, and the governing boards of independent postsecondary institutions shall adopt a policy concerning sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking, as defined in the federal Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. Sec. 1092(f)), involving a student, both on and off campus. The policy shall include all of the following:

- (1) An affirmative consent standard in the determination of whether consent was given by both parties to sexual activity. "Affirmative consent" means affirmative, conscious, and voluntary agreement to engage in sexual activity. It is the responsibility of each person involved in the sexual activity to ensure that the person has the affirmative consent of the other or others to engage in the sexual activity. Lack of protest or resistance does not mean consent, nor does silence mean consent. Affirmative consent must be ongoing throughout a sexual activity and can be revoked at any time. The existence of a dating relationship between

the persons involved, or the fact of past sexual relations between them, should never by itself be assumed to be an indicator of consent.

(2) A policy that, in the evaluation of complaints in any disciplinary process, it shall not be a valid excuse to alleged lack of affirmative consent that the accused believed that the complainant consented to the sexual activity under either of the following circumstances:

(A) The accused's belief in affirmative consent arose from the intoxication or recklessness of the accused.

(B) The accused did not take reasonable steps, in the circumstances known to the accused at the time, to ascertain whether the complainant affirmatively consented.

(3) A policy that the standard used in determining whether the elements of the complaint against the accused have been demonstrated is the preponderance of the evidence.

(4) A policy that, in the evaluation of complaints in the disciplinary process, it shall not be a valid excuse that the accused believed that the complainant affirmatively consented to the sexual activity if the accused knew or reasonably should have known that the complainant was unable to consent to the sexual activity under any of the following circumstances:

(A) The complainant was asleep or unconscious.

(B) The complainant was incapacitated due to the influence of drugs, alcohol, or medication, so that the complainant could not understand the fact, nature, or extent of the sexual activity.

(C) The complainant was unable to communicate due to a mental or physical condition.

(b) In order to receive state funds for student financial assistance, the governing board of each community college district, the Trustees of the California State University, the Regents of the University of California, and the governing boards of independent postsecondary institutions shall adopt detailed and victim-centered policies and protocols regarding sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking

involving a student that comport with best practices and current professional standards. At a minimum, the policies and protocols shall cover all of the following:

- (1) A policy statement on how the institution will provide appropriate protections for the privacy of individuals involved, including confidentiality.
- (2) Initial response by the institution's personnel to a report of an incident, including requirements specific to assisting the victim, providing information in writing about the importance of preserving evidence, and the identification and location of witnesses.
- (3) Response to stranger and non-stranger sexual assault.
- (4) The preliminary victim interview, including the development of a victim interview protocol, and a comprehensive follow-up victim interview, as appropriate.
- (5) Contacting and interviewing the accused.
- (6) Seeking the identification and location of witnesses.
- (7) Providing written notification to the victim about the availability of, and contact information for, on- and off-campus resources and services, and coordination with law enforcement, as appropriate.
- (8) Participation of victim advocates and other supporting people.
- (9) Investigating allegations that alcohol or drugs were involved in the incident.
- (10) Providing that an individual who participates as a complainant or witness in an investigation of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, or stalking will not be subject to disciplinary sanctions for a violation of the institution's student conduct policy at or near the time of the incident, unless the institution determines that the violation was egregious, including, but not limited to, an action that places the health or safety of any other person at risk or involves plagiarism, cheating, or academic dishonesty.
- (11) The role of the institutional staff supervision.

(12) A comprehensive, trauma-informed training program for campus officials involved in investigating and adjudicating sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking cases.

(13) Procedures for confidential reporting by victims and third parties.

(c) In order to receive state funds for student financial assistance, the governing board of each community college district, the Trustees of the California State University, the Regents of the University of California, and the governing boards of independent postsecondary institutions shall, to the extent feasible, enter into memoranda of understanding, agreements, or collaborative partnerships with existing on-campus and community-based organizations, including rape crisis centers and domestic violence centers, to refer students for assistance or make services available to students, including counseling, health, mental health, victim advocacy, and legal assistance, and including resources for the accused.

.... *[Content omitted for clarity.]*