

Staying Safe at Mardi Gras

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Spring break for Tulane University and Mardi Gras coincide this year. This serendipity brings myriad opportunities for students ? and potential for problems, says Allen Thomas, coordinator in the Tulane Office of Violence Prevention and Support Services in the Division of Student Affairs.



Allen Thomas' mission is to prevent students from becoming victims of crime and to be there for those who run into problems. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Thomas says alcohol can make a person more vulnerable to victimization. He wants students to be aware of their surroundings, stay in groups and avoid risky situations.

“Not only should each group have a designated driver, they should also have a designated thinker to make sure that no one gets left behind at a parade, in the French Quarter or at a party, or goes off alone with someone they just met. The priority should be that everyone gets home safely,” says Thomas, who holds a doctoral degree in health education.

If a student becomes the victim of a crime, it is important that he or should report it, Thomas says. He encourages students not to engage in self-blame, failing to reach

out for help because of embarrassment.

Thomas assists students who are victims of crime in navigating campus and community services, but he also serves as a resource for faculty and staff members, parents and family members, and friends of students who may face this situation.

National campus statistics indicate that only five percent of students who are sexually assaulted report the crime, and Thomas hopes to see more students seeking help if they become victims of crimes.

“This is what's rewarding for me about this job ? working with all of the various departments at Tulane and community agencies to rally around a student who needs help, to empower the student in his or her own healing process, so they can finish their education and accomplish their dreams,” Thomas says.

During work hours, Thomas can be reached at 504-314-2161. His office is on the ground level of the Lavin-Bernick Center on the uptown campus. After hours, students can call the [Tulane University Police Department](#) at 504-865-5200 (extension 5911 on the uptown campus), and students off campus should call 911. TUPD is the primary resource for students needing immediate help. They will coordinate services with an on-call member of the [Student Affairs](#) staff to help students who are victims of crime.