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The Clery Act: Student Awareness and Perceptions of Effectiveness at a Public University and a Private College in East Tennessee

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**The Clery Act:
Student Awareness and Perceptions of Effectiveness at a
Public University and a Private College in East Tennessee**

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ABSTRACT

The U.S. Congress has recognized that safety is essential on our college and university campuses. Incidents such as the Virginia Tech massacre and the death of Jeanne Clery have emphasized the need for legislation that assists students in selecting a safe college and improves their safety by reducing the incidence of crimes and fires. The Clery Act is a federal law that requires colleges and universities to provide annual information on the number and type of crimes on campus as well as the number and cause of fires occurring in the residence halls. The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived effectiveness of the Clery Act by students at two higher educational institutions in East Tennessee.

This study determined that students are not aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the crime and fire statistics to a significant extent. However, students are aware of the Clery Act as it relates to the issuance of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings by their institution. Students do not tend to use the Clery Act crime and fire statistics in their decisions as to what college to attend, indicating the limited effectiveness of the Clery Act. Lack of use of the Clery Act crime and fire statistics may be related to a lack of awareness of their existence. Students perceive to a significant extent that the reporting of the Clery Act crime and fire statistics as well as the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings, improved their safety and security while on campus. The Clery Act mandated use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings issued by the institution results in students changing their behavior to protect themselves and their property. Students perceive that the reporting of crime and fire statistics as well as the use of safety notices, emergency notifications, or timely warnings, has reduced crime and fires on campus.