

RESTORE

A MANDATED UNIVERSITY REPORTER GUIDE FOR RESPONDING TO A PERSON ACCUSED OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE



REALIZE THAT THEIR RESPONSES MAY VARY.

When someone approaches you and tells you that they have been accused, they may start:

- blaming others: "they came on to me," "they started it,"
- blaming themselves: "If only I had not been....," "If only I had....,"
- denying that it happened: "I could never have done anything like that....," "that's not the type of person I am....,"
- withdrawing from the community: "I don't deserve support," "I should leave this group,"

All these responses are normal when you learn you have potentially hurt someone. Know that none of these responses, or others you may see, indicate what happened or not.



ENGAGE IN A DIALOGUE WITH THEM.

You do not have to have all the answers for what to do to help them and it is not your job to try to find out the truth. It is better to ask, "what do you need?," "how can I be helpful?" so you know what they are looking for in terms of support.



SHOW SUPPORT BY LISTENING FULLY AND OPENLY.

Sometimes you do not need words, giving your time and attention without distractions shows support. Many people share that just being able to talk about their experiences to someone else lessens the weight of isolation and secrecy.



TRY TO UNDERSTAND AS BEST AS YOU CAN.

Understanding someone's feelings, thoughts, or beliefs does not mean you agree or accept them. You can say, "I can understand why being accused of hurting someone is difficult to hear."

A helpful template to acknowledge what is coming up for them is, "I hear that you are __ (insert feeling) __ because __ (insert reason for feeling from what information you have from them)."



OWN AND HONOR WHAT COMES UP FOR YOU.

When we find out someone we know and potentially care about has been accused of harming someone else it can bring up a lot of feelings such as confusion, sadness, anger, and/or concern. All and any feelings you have are valid. Engage with confidential resources to support you in processing your feelings and OUEC to understand what actions you need to take.



REVIEW AND OFFER RESOURCES.

You can best support someone by offering options and leaving space for them to decide where to go from there. The student may be interested in connecting to mental health providers or speaking with the Confidential Resource Advisor.



ESTABLISH HOW YOU WANT TO MOVE FORWARD

Reassure the student that you will keep the information shared private and put a plan in place for what they can expect moving forward. Depending on your relationship with the student, you can offer to check in with them or say that you will wait for them to follow up with you. It is okay if you need time to process what they shared. It may be helpful for you to talk to someone to reflect upon what is best for you now, knowing that it is okay if you need to adjust later. Consulting with OUEC and/or OPEN staff may be beneficial.

ADDITIONAL REMINDERS

AS UNIVERSITY MANDATED REPORTERS

RECOGNIZE THE NEED TO REPORT.

Students might say things like, "We hooked up but they are telling people that it wasn't consensual..." or "We were in a group all together talking about what kinds of things we like to do when it comes to sex" but may not clearly label accusations as sexual assault or sexual harassment, for example. Pay attention to the accusations they are describing.

"If you aren't sure whether it's an accusation about sexual violence, contact the Office for University Equity and Compliance to consult.

REMIND STUDENTS ABOUT YOUR REPORTING OBLIGATIONS.

It's important to remind students of your reporting obligations so they can make informed choices about what to disclose to you. Anytime new or additional information is shared with you about an alleged incident of sexual violence you must report that.

"I appreciate you coming to tell me about this. Before you share more about what is happening, I want to remind you of my reporting obligations as a university mandated reporter. You may have already been contacted by the Title IX office, however I will still need to let them know we talked today."

"The Title IX office makes decisions about what actions to take or not, based on the information they have. It's important that they have all the information available to them and they want to hear from everyone involved in the situation, including you. They, and I would include I, want to make sure you are aware of all your rights and resources. The University takes any allegation seriously and also takes due process seriously."

ASSESS SAFETY

DETERMINE IF IT'S AN EMERGENCY. Ensure the space where you are speaking is safe and protects privacy. If a student says they aren't feeling safe, are in danger, or makes statements that concern you about their or others safety, get them to the appropriate resource.

SUBMIT A REPORT

Fill out the online discrimination complaint form on OUEC's website (under file a complaint). This is automatically routed to the Title IX Coordinator.

Report just the facts of the interaction including the date, time, and specific location, any information shared with you, and what was discussed. Do not include your opinion.

Remember, you are not alone responding to disclosures of sexual violence. The Office for University Equity and Compliance (OUEC) and the Office of Prevention and Education at Northeastern (OPEN) are here to assist you in meeting your reporting obligations and to ensure students know the resources available to them.



Make an appointment to meet with OPEN staff.

This QR code links to a confidential service request form. The form can also be found at bit.ly/svrequestform. Sign in with your Northeastern credentials to access the form.

This guide was created by the Office of Prevention and Education at Northeastern University (OPEN) and was updated August 2022