

RESPONDING TO A DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

HOW TO RESPOND TO A DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

If you receive a disclosure concerning sexual violence, it is important to inform the person making the disclosure of your commitment to keep confidential all information that is provided. It is also important to inform the person disclosing that there are limits to confidentiality (as outlined in the Confidentiality section of the Sexual Violence Policy).

The Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education (The Centre)

301 York Lanes
416-736-5211 (24/7)
thecentre@yorku.ca

Local 24/7 Services available are as follows:

Toronto Rape Crisis Centre/Multicultural Women Against Rape (TRCC/ MWAR)
416-597-8808.

Women's College Hospital Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Care Centre (SA/DVCC)
416-323-6040.

For additional resources, resources refer to thecentre.yorku.ca

THE CENTRE FOR SEXUAL VIOLENCE RESPONSE, SUPPORT & EDUCATION

If someone discloses an experience of sexual violence, direct or offer to accompany them to the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education (301 York Lanes, 416-736-5211, thecentre@yorku.ca). The Centre has extensive expertise in responding to instances of sexual violence and is in the best position to provide referrals for support and to outline information about the complaint processes for students, staff, and faculty. Wherever possible, this referral should be made **before** the person discloses the details of the incident(s) of sexual violence and/or any identifying information about involved parties.

To facilitate a connection with the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education, ask the survivor if they would like more information about the role of the Centre. The Centre can provide the following services as requested by the survivor:

- Facilitate referrals to University resources and community agencies;
- Coordinate referral to medical services;
- Coordinate academic/workplace accommodations through respective offices;
- Coordinate housing relocation for students on campus;
- Assist with the coordination of safety planning;
- Coordinate access to emergency housing;
- Coordinate emergency financial assistance;
- Coordinate referrals to on and off campus trauma-informed counselling services;
- Provide information about reporting options;
- Assist with decision-making and navigating University processes;
- Manage the flow of information among departments or offices where necessary;
- Coordinate with other institutions where a student may be cross-registered to ensure access to supports and accommodations; and
- Provide effective and ongoing support for survivors with respect to support, services, accommodations, and complaint procedures. Wherever needed, the The Centre advocates on behalf of survivors to ensure the needs of survivors are met at all times.

It is important that people supporting survivors and/or receiving disclosures have access to support for themselves. If you would like to speak with someone, you can contact the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education and they will provide you with an appropriate referral.

IF YOU RECEIVE A DISCLOSURE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE:

1. Assess Immediate Safety
2. Inform Survivor of Limitations to Confidentiality
3. Listen Without Judgment
4. Refer the Individual to the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education

If at any point, you are unsure on how to proceed, contact the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education (301 York Lanes, 416-736-5211, thecentre@yorku.ca).

1. Assess Immediate Safety

If possible, ensure that the disclosure takes place somewhere the survivor feels comfortable and where their privacy is heeded. Ask the survivor if their immediate safety is at risk.

- If the immediate safety of the survivor or any other member of the community is at risk, contact Security Services at 416-736-5333 or Ext. 33333 and/or 911.
- If immediate safety is not at risk, ask the individual if they are somewhere they feel comfortable.

Please Note: Security Services will only contact Police Services with the consent of the survivor unless it is assessed that there is an imminent risk to the safety of an individual or the broader community.

2. Inform the Survivor of Limitations to Confidentiality

It is your responsibility to inform the person making the disclosure of any limits to confidentiality before they disclose identifying information. If you are unsure of any limitations to confidentiality, offer to refer the individual to the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education (301 York Lanes, 416-736-5211, thecentre@yorku.ca).

3. Listen Without Judgment

A supportive and validating initial response to disclosures of sexual violence often makes a significant difference for survivors who may be apprehensive about sharing deeply personal or difficult information. Here are some ways to communicate support and concern:

- Let the survivor maintain as much control over the pace of the disclosure as possible. Allow them to finish without interrupting and offer breaks when needed.
- Listen carefully to what the survivor says and acknowledge the courage it took for them to come forward and share their experience.
- Do not make dismissive or victim blaming comments. Questioning the survivor's behaviour or experience may result in the survivor feeling judged, disbelieved, blamed or a range of other negative emotions.
- Refrain from asking the survivor specific details about the incident. Intrusive questioning about the incident may cause the survivor to feel that they are being interrogated and that you are not listening to what they are sharing with you.
- Avoid initiating physical contact with the survivor without their consent. Some survivors may feel uncomfortable with physical contact following sexual violence.
- Create time and space for the individual to determine what decisions best suit their particular circumstances. Do not pressure them to make a decision or impose any decision on them.

4. Refer the Individual to the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education

An important part of supporting a person who has experienced sexual violence is to provide them with information about their options and the resources that are available to them. Navigating university and community resources after experiencing sexual violence can be difficult. Your role is to assist the survivor in connecting with the appropriate office.

Recommend that the survivor contact the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education (301 York Lanes, 416-736-5211, thecentre@yorku.ca). If the survivor would like to call The Centre or a community agency, offer to sit with them as they place the call. If appropriate and feasible, offer to accompany the survivor to the Centre for Sexual Violence Response, Support & Education or community resources of their choice.

Respect the survivor's choice of whether to report the incident(s) to Security Services or to Police Services. Do not report the incident(s) yourself. Do not pressure the survivor to seek further assistance if they decline to do so.

SUPPORTS AND SERVICES

The University will provide support and appropriately accommodate the needs of those who have experienced sexual violence or have been impacted by sexual violence.

The Centre will facilitate access to supports and services on campus, working in collaboration with other offices / departments in order to best meet the needs of survivors. The Centre may call together a Sexual Violence Response Team to help coordinate and facilitate support services and resources for survivors.

Supports and resources offered include but are not limited to:

- academic/workplace accommodation;
- counselling;
- critical incident coordination;
- case management;
- alternative housing;
- crisis funding;
- safety planning, and;
- peer support.

Supports and services available are specific to the affiliation (student/staff/faculty) of the individual and their needs. Support, services and/or accommodations are available whether or not a survivor has filed a formal report/complaint of an incident.