

Sexual Assault Incident Response

A Guide for Faculty/Staff

Resources available, procedures in place, and responsibilities you have if you are in a situation where a student discloses they have been sexually assaulted.

Responsibility of Faculty/Staff

Sexual assault can leave a victim feeling unsafe, confused, and scared. When someone reports a sexual assault to you, you may help the victim by creating a safe environment and listening to them. You also have obligations as a Responsible University Employee under Title IX and the UWF Policy on Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Violence and Gender-Based Discrimination. In your role as faculty or staff, students may perceive you as someone who can lend a helping hand or be a good listener. Your expression of interest and concern may be a critical factor in helping a struggling student find appropriate assistance.

What if a Student Discloses Sexual Assault?

If a student discloses sexual assault, it is often difficult to know how to react and yet your reaction is crucial in helping them overcome this trauma and seek support. Faculty/staff members should determine for themselves their personal comfort levels with becoming involved with student problems. Becoming the main source of support to a troubled student sometimes can be overwhelming, frightening, and/or tiring. It is important that you know your own limitations in providing assistance to students and that you are aware of times when the best option is a referral. **Counseling and Psychological Services** provides consultation services to the entire UWF community and can assist you in making an effective referral. It is also important that you know and are able to communicate to students your obligations to report sexual violence to the Title IX Coordinator. Do your best to stay calm and attentive to the immediate needs of the victim. Create an environment that is respectful, private, and non-judgemental. Assure that the individual is not at immediate risk of harm. If so, the police should be contacted immediately. Take a supportive, non-judgemental stance.

The Do's and Don'ts

CONSIDER

- **Assessing** the student's immediate safety.
- **Listening** without conveying judgement and be aware that victims can feel shame and anger.
- **Letting** them know you believe them.
- **Encouraging** them to get medical attention.
- **Encouraging** them to report the incident.
- **Advising** them of resources available and encourage them to use the resources.
- **Advising** them of your reporting obligations. If you are uncertain what your reporting obligations are, contact the Dean of Students Office at 850.474.2384.

AVOID

- **Expressing judgement even when high-risk behaviors on the part of the victim were involved (e.g., intoxication).**
- **Pressuring the student to do anything they do not want to do, including filing a police report.**
- **Discouraging a medical exam even if they do not appear to have physical trauma.**
- **Initiating comfort in the form of physical touching (e.g., hugging).**
- **Asking for details of the incident.**
- **Promising a student that you will keep the information private.**



Comments like, *“what were you wearing,” “why would you go along with someone like that,” or “you shouldn't have...”* are not helpful and can further victimize the victim.

Checklist for Assisting Sexual Assault Incident Response

Safety: Assess the immediate physical and mental safety of the student. If student appears to be in danger or crisis, contact:

- University Police: 911 or 850.474.2415
- Escambia Sheriff's Office: 911 or 850.463.9630
- Counseling and Psychological Services: 850.474.2420

Medical Needs: If emergency medical attention is required, students should call 911 or seek treatment at the closest emergency room.

Inform of the important of medical care to screen/treat for injuries, sexually transmitted diseases (STIs) and pregnancy. These services can be completed at Emergency Rooms or at Urgent Care facilities as a walk-in. UWF Student Health Services offers primary care including testing for STDs and STIs by appointment at 850.474.2172

Forensic Evidence Exam: All sexual assault victims should consider undergoing a forensic evidence exam "rape kit" as soon as possible and can be completed up to five days after the incident regardless of intent to press charges. All hospital emergency rooms are required to have specially trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE Nurse) available to provide these exams.

Inform that having a rape kit exam preserves the option to prosecute but that having the exam does NOT commit an individual to press charges. Rape kits will be held for a period of 4 years at the Escambia County Sheriff's Office and will be available for processing if they choose to report at a later time.

The forensic exam collects evidence from the body and clothes of the victim. If the assault just happened, it is important to instruct the student not to wash, bathe, douche, or change clothes prior to requesting a rape kit exam. If student intends to complete a rape kit, have them bring a change of clothes to the hospital as their clothes will likely be taken into evidence.

Victim Advocacy and Counseling: Advise the student of free and confidential counseling services available through the University Counseling and Psychological Services. The University Police and the Rape Crisis Center at Lakeview can make arrangements for victim advocacy services.

- University Police: 850.474.2415, ask for victim advocate services
- University Counseling and Psychological Services: 850.474.2420
- Rape Crisis Center at Lakeview: 850.433.7273 [RAPE], to access the 24/7 confidential hotline or a victim advocate

Student Reporting: Whether or not the student wishes to press charges, they can and should report the incident to police. Reasons for doing this include:

- Giving the student the option of pressing charges later.
- Having an incident report on file in case the same assailant hurts someone else.
- Making police aware of potential danger to other students.
- Offer referral for reporting the incident to University and local authorities:
- University Police: 850.474.2415, ask for victim advocate services
- Escambia County Sherriff's Office: 850.436.9630

Faculty/Staff Reporting Obligations and Confidentiality: Do not INQUIRE about time, date, location or other incident details until you have informed the student of the following information:

The University will do its utmost to protect the student's privacy. Student's name and other identifying information will not be released without the student's permission (unless the student is in imminent danger in which case 911 should be called whether the student consents or not).

University faculty/staff are obligated to report the name of the student as well as the time, date, and approximate location of the incident to the Title IX Coordinator (850.474.2914)

A community notice is possible in situations where the community is deemed at risk; the victim will be informed if this is to happen while preserving the victim's anonymity.

Counseling and Psychological Services can provide confidential counseling to students. Psychotherapists are not mandated to report incidents to the Title IX Coordinator. Students can be seen on an emergency and crisis bases. Call 850.474.2420, available 24 hours a day to speak with a counselor.