



RESOURCE FOR ASSISTING STUDENT VICTIMS OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

How to prepare before a student discloses an incident of sexual violence:

Understand why this is an issue on college campuses

Sexual assault, intimate partner violence and stalking are all too common in our society and college campuses, including Seton Hall, are no exception. While people of all genders survive and perpetrate this type of violence, women are being disproportionately victimized. This pervasive violence is interpreted as gender-based discrimination under Title IX, a federal law applicable to all colleges and universities who receive any federal funding.

How does this apply to my role as a professor/administrator/staff member?

Recent guidance from the federal government had directed that faculty and staff, with only few exceptions, are regarded as responsible employees and are mandated to report any information about sexual violence to the Title IX Coordinator or Deputy Title IX Coordinator. The exceptions are members of the priest community, staff in Counseling & Psychological Services, and staff in Health Services.

Who are the Title IX Coordinator and Deputy Title IX Coordinators?

Lori Brown
Director of Insurance & EEO Compliance
Title IX Coordinator
973-313-6132

Karen Van Norman
Associate Vice President & Dean of Students
Deputy Title IX Coordinator
973-761-9076

Cara Foerst
Dean of Students, Law School
Deputy Title IX Coordinator
973-642-8707

Know the definition of sexual violence.

Sexual violence means physical sexual acts perpetrated against an individual without consent. Consent means fully conscious, voluntary acceptance and agreement. In other words, if threat, coercion, intoxication or violence is happening, consent does not exist.

Adopt a victim-centered approach.

When we provide survivors with information so that they can make informed choices about who they tell, and the support they receive, we increase the likelihood that survivors will come forward and report violence. With increased reporting, we have more opportunity for creating a safer community.



Inform students of your role as a mandated reporter.

Do your best to ensure that the student knows that you are a mandated reporter before they disclose an incident that you must report.

When necessary, interrupt students to inform them of your role. You might say, “I’m sorry to interrupt you, but I want you to be informed about your choices regarding what you tell and to whom this information is reported. There are a number of issues where I am required to report what you tell me to the Dean of Students. I’m happy to talk with you and put you in touch with the Dean, but if you’d like to first explore options for support, accommodations and accountability with someone who can keep your information confidential, here’s a list of numbers you can call” and provide contact information about CAPS, Health Services, or Father Nick’s office.

What to do when a student discloses an incident of sexual violence

Remember your role.

You are **not a counselor**, you are **not an investigator**, and you are **not called upon to name**, analyze, or define students’ experiences.

You are a bridge to connect the student with the Dean of Students or Title IX Coordinator who will provide the survivor with options for reporting, support, accommodations and accountability. The Dean of Students can be reached after hours through Public Safety (973-761-9300) or on her cell phone (201) 259-5106; you do not have to disclose to Public Safety why you need to speak with the Dean. You may also provide the student with information about Essex County SAVE (Rape Care Center), available 24 hours at 877-733-2273.

Keep the survivor’s needs and feelings at the center of the process.

Do listen respectfully and believe the student. Very few people lie about sexual assault or rape. In fact, there is severe under-reporting of these crimes. Consider how difficult it is to recount, and by extension often re-live, trauma by talking about an experience of sexual violence. Your ability to listen and respond in nonjudgmental ways can help to change the culture of silence that exists around sexual violence. Victims may present in different ways and it is important to recognize that victims experience trauma in different ways and to be mindful of this when speaking to the student.

Do let the survivor know that you care, using a calm and compassionate tone. Do say something like, “I’m so sorry that you have to go through this.”

Don’t overly express your own feelings about what happened to them.

Don’t say, “It’s outrageous that you’ve had to experience this!”

Remember: if we react with shock and outrage we may silence survivors. Survivors will often shift away from identifying and discussing their own needs to responding to our reaction. If met with an overly emotional response, survivors may feel like they have to take care of us.



Do acknowledge your non-verbal expressions, when appropriate: If a strong emotion flickers across your face as you listen, e.g., if you know that anger passed over your face, do acknowledge it.

Do say (in a calm voice) something like, “If you saw anger on my face I just want you to know that I wasn’t angry at you; I felt anger at the fact that someone would choose to harm you.”

Don’t define their experience for them.

Don’t say, “Well, it sounds to me like you were raped!”

Do use the words the survivor uses to describe their experience. If they say rape, don’t interrogate them about what they mean. If they say “taken advantage of” or “violated” use those words, or other general terms such as “harm.”

Do validate that what happened to them was not ok. Do say something like, “I am so sorry that person harmed you.”

Remember: none of us have the magic words that will support survivors in all contexts. Even from the best of intentions we might say something hurtful. If you see that what you said caused the survivor to become upset, acknowledge this. You might say something like, “I think what I said that just made this harder for you.”

Establish clear boundaries and be a bridge to forms of support

Offer forms of support that are appropriate for your role: Let the survivor know what you can realistically offer to support them. For instance, if you are a faculty member you can, if you choose, offer extensions on deadlines for course work. Or you can refer them to the Dean of Students to explore options of late withdrawal from your class if the violence is impairing their ability to pass your class. If you are a supervisor of a student employee, let them know if there are options for taking time off and/or rearranging their work schedule.

For support that is needed beyond your role, serve as a bridge to campus and community support and resources

Don’t say: “I’ll be there for you in whatever way you need.”

Do say: “We have campus and community resources to help support you. Here’s a resource sheet with numbers.” (See below)

Don’t say: “I’ll show up at the court.”

Do say: “If you would like to have someone with you at the court, let’s talk to Dean Foerst and decide who can go with you.”

Don’t say: “I’ll make sure justice will be served.”

Do say: “Dean Foerst will help to make sure you are connected with the people who can assist you throughout the process.”



How to Fulfill Your Responsibilities after a Student Discloses

Contact the Dean of Students/Deputy Title IX Coordinator

If the student is willing, call Dean Foerst while the student is present and help to coordinate a meeting. If the student is not willing to speak to Dean Foerst, you are still required to contact her and report what the student disclosed.

Dean Foerst will contact the student to discuss options for support, accommodations, and accountability. The focus is on immediate safety and meeting the needs of the student.

Keep the student's information private.

If the topic of a student survivor's performance as an employee or success in law school comes up in department meetings, provide the minimum information you can in order to support the student.

Don't say: Since she was raped she's been struggling in my class.

Do say: She is in the midst of a significant crisis.

If you need to talk about the impact on you of hearing about this student's trauma, please call the Dean of Students, CAPS or Father Nick for support, rather than speaking to colleagues.

Following up with the student.

Allow the student to be a student – treat her as you would any other student. If she brings up the incident, listen with empathy and encourage her to use available resources. Continue to remember your role – you are not a counselor, not an investigator, but you are a valuable link to connect the student to support.



Resources for Help

On Campus

Law School Public Safety and Security (973) 642-8252
Office of the Dean of Students (973) 642-8707
Law School Chaplin's Office (973) 642-8859
Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (973) 761-9500
Health Services (973) 761-9175

Off Campus

Newark Police Department (973) 733-6000
Babyland Family Violence Program (973) 399-3400
Essex County Rape Care Center 1-877-733-2273
The Safe House (973) 759-2154
Rape, Abuse, Incest National Network (RAINN) www.rainn.org

Local Hospital offering Sexual Assault Exams

Newark Beth Israel Medical Center
201 Lyons Avenue Newark, NJ 1
(800) 843-2384

Reporting Options

On-Campus Private

Lori Brown, Title IX Coordinator (973) 313-6132

Karen Van Norman, Deputy Title IX Coordinator (973) 761-9076

Law School Public Safety & Security (973)761-9300

Cara Foerst, Deputy Title IX Coordinator (973)-642-8726 (law school)

On-Campus Confidential

Law School Chaplin's Office (973)-642-8859

Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) (973) 761-9500

Health Services (973) 761-9175

24 Hour Resources

On-Campus

Reach the Dean of Students or the Counselor on Call 24-hours through Public Safety (973) 761-9300; Dean Foerst cell (201) 259-5106

Off-Campus

Newark Police Department - (973) 733-6000
Essex County Rape Care Center 1-877-733-2273