



## Tips for Responding to a Sexual Misconduct Disclosure

Conversations around sexual assault require care and compassion. If a student approaches you to talk about something that happened, it shows that the student is comfortable with you and trusts you. It is important you let the student know you are ready to listen and assist, but that they understand your reporting obligations.

- You want to communicate that you are not a confidential resource while still inviting the student to share and feel safe.

### An example of how to say this is...

*"I know that it takes courage for you to share this with me but before you go forward, I need you to know there are certain things I have to report. If I need to share information, I will do that in a way that maintains your privacy. I can help you find a confidential person to talk with if you would prefer. I hope you will talk to someone whether it's me or a confidential resource (ex. Clergy, Rape Crisis Hotline)."*

**When a student shares information with you, your verbal and nonverbal response is very important.**

Some helpful things to do and say are...

- Listen without interrupting.
- Do not worry about having to say just the right thing – just being there can help.
- Respect & mirror the language the student uses to identify what's happened.
- Remember that this is a time to allow the student to vent whatever emotions, thoughts or beliefs they have connected to their experience.
- Allow for tears & silence. This may also be an opportunity for you to think about how you can help and be there for the student.
- **BELIEVE** the student. (Reflect what you are hearing: "That must have been tough/frightening/scary for you.")
- Ask what you can do to be supportive.
- Ask if they want to get medical attention – no matter how long ago the assault occurred.
- Ask yourself, "Am I doing everything in my power to create a safe environment for this student?"

### Some things that are not helpful to do or say are...

- Asking "why" questions or questions that may imply blame and put the student on the defensive ("What were you doing there?").
- Asking questions to satisfy your own curiosity.
- Blaming or judging the student's actions ("You shouldn't have had so much to drink").
- Dismissing the student's feelings or minimizing their experience ("It could have been worse").
- Trying to "fix" the problem.

## **What about pregnant and parenting students?**

Pregnant and parenting students may face discrimination on campus, including in the classroom. Title IX protects students from harassment based on sex, and this category includes pregnancy, childbirth, and related conditions.

To promote a harassment-free classroom, faculty may consult [PregnantScholar.org](http://PregnantScholar.org)'s best practices for faculty section, which includes a suggested syllabus statement on this subject:

### **Sample Syllabus Statement**

*The following suggested statement comes from PregnantScholar.org:*

[Insert College] does not discriminate against any student on the basis of pregnancy or related conditions. Absences due to medical conditions relating to pregnancy will be excused for as long as deemed medically necessary by a student's doctor, and students will be given the opportunity to make up missed work. Students needing accommodations can seek assistance with accommodations from the [insert ADA/Section 504 office name and contact] or from the Title IX Office [insert name and contact].

### **Interactions with Students**

#### **When should I let a student know that I am required to report all information relating to sexual misconduct?**

You should let the student know about your role as a Responsible Employee as soon as possible.

- **Faculty:** If you are faculty, please consider including a clear statement in your course syllabi and, if applicable, in your office space, relating to your role and responsibilities, students' reporting options, and available resources. You may also consider linking to this site, to your College's Title IX site, and/or to the [Office of Equity, Inclusion, and Compliance's Crisis Resources Live Binder](#) in your Canvas shell so that students have easy access to on-campus and off-campus resources.
- **Staff:** If a student begins to tell you about a sexual assault or sexual harassment incident, you should quickly interject that you are mandated to report any information they confide in you. Having a statement mentally prepared and/or physically present in your office may help to keep misunderstandings from occurring.

### **Sample Syllabus Statement (Faculty)**

*The following statement was approved by the Golden West College Academic Senate in November 2017. Faculty across the District may adapt this statement to be College-specific:*