Title IX Guidance - How to Compassionately
Address Disclosures by Survivors of Sexual Misconduct

How to Handle a Disclosure

Students or co-workers at NEIU may disclose sexual misconduct to you for many reasons, including:

- The person is looking for help (most common).
- The incident has negatively affected the person’s academics or employment.
- The person has safety concerns.
- The person needs someone to confide in but isn’t seeking action.

Here are ways to address a disclosure as compassionately as possible in light of your mandatory duty requirements.

The Gentle Interruption

The goal of a gentle interruption is to let a person know of your mandatory reporting duties during a one-on-one conversation. If it feels as if a conversation may lead to a disclosure, gently interrupt to inform the person of your reporting duties so that the person can decide if they would like to share more information with you. Some sample language includes:

- “It sounds like you want to talk about a sensitive situation. Can we pause so I can share my role as a mandatory reporter with you? Then I can share safe reporting.”
- “Before we go further, I want to let you know I’m a mandatory reporter, and this is what that means …Let me tell you about the Confidential Advisor and how they can help.”
- Talk in hypothetical situations.

If the person decides not to share anything further with you, that is okay. Provide confidential resources in case they are interested in talking with someone without the concern of reporting. If the person is a student, you can refer them to NEIU’s Confidential Advisor or walk/direct them to Student Counseling during open hours to ask for an emergency appointment. The Ombuds is a confidential space for students and employees. You should provide the person with the Notice of Rights and Options, which includes community resources. Not everyone wants to share a sexual misconduct incident with anyone, even in a safe space, at NEIU.

Making a Report

If the student or co-worker does share information that activates your mandatory reporter obligations, you should contact the Title IX Office to report any relevant information that is shared (titleix@neiu.edu). This includes the name of the Complainant, name of the Respondent (if you know), and any incident details shared. There is no need to ask for more information.

The Title IX Office is not permitted to share any information about the situation with you after you submit a Title IX report. This is to protect the privacy of Complainants and Respondents. The Complainant may share any information with you, but be sensitive in not pressuring them for further information.

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For helpful guidance on your mandatory reporter obligations, please see this video.

**Supporting a Survivor**

The following are supportive ways to respond to a student or co-worker who has disclosed that they are a survivor of sexual misconduct.

*Say Thank You*

Disclosing can be scary. It is important to acknowledge the person’s courage and vulnerability to share with you. Things you can say are “thank you for trusting me” and “thank you for sharing with me.”

*Mirror Language*

The fear of not being believed is a real concern for people who have experienced an assault or interpersonal violence. Mirror the language of the person disclosing to you. If they label their experience as “harassment,” it can be harmful to use another word like “flirting.” Similarly, asking certain types of questions about the situation (i.e. “why” questions) may be viewed as judgmental, disbelief, or victim-blaming. Use their language.

*Empathic Listening*

Pay attention to the person speaking and respond with compassion, feeling, and insight. Listen non-judgmentally. Try these tips to practice empathetic listening:

- Let the person guide the conversation and choose what they’d like to talk about.
- Try to see things from the other person’s point of view.
- Acknowledge and validate the other person’s perspective.
- Be aware of your biases and attitudes.
- Pay attention to the person’s verbal and nonverbal cues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions to Ask</th>
<th>What to Say</th>
<th>What Not to Say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Are you safe?</em></td>
<td><em>Thank you for sharing this</em></td>
<td><em>Questions about the incident or investigation.</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>How are you feeling?</em></td>
<td><em>with me.</em></td>
<td><em>Questioning the validity of</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What can I do to help?</em></td>
<td><em>This sounds</em></td>
<td><em>the person’s experience.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>What kind of support do</em></td>
<td><em>upsetting/difficult/hard.</em></td>
<td><em>Why/how did this happen?</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>you need?</em></td>
<td><em>I hear you.</em></td>
<td><em>Promising outcomes.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>How are you doing in</em></td>
<td><em>I see that you’re feeling...</em></td>
<td><em>Promising accommodations</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><em>classes/at work?</em></td>
<td><em>You are not alone.</em></td>
<td><em>that are out of your control.</em></td>
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<td><em>Do you have friends/family/loved ones who are</em></td>
<td><em>I’m here for you.</em></td>
<td><em>Sharing information related</em></td>
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<td><em>supporting you?</em></td>
<td><em>I care about you and your</em></td>
<td><em>to the incident with other</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td><em>experience.</em></td>
<td><em>parties.</em></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Placing blame.</em></td>
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Offer Resources and Make Referrals

You should provide the person with the Notice of Rights and Options, which includes community resources. Offer to make a phone call or go to a non-profit with the person if you are comfortable doing so.

Respect the Person's Decisions and Privacy

There is no wrong way for a person to react and process a traumatic experience. It is important to empower a survivor to make their own decisions about what to do following an incident, including decisions about reporting and seeking help. The person’s decision to report or seek support is the survivor’s alone, but your involvement can be encouraging and positive.

Get Support for Yourself

It is important to take care of your needs as well. Supporting a survivor can take an emotional toll. Make sure you take the time to take care of yourself and process your feelings, but please be careful not to violate the survivor’s privacy or confidentiality. The Employee Assistance Plan (EAP) is available and free to employees: Magellan - 866-659-3848, https://www.magellanc ascend.com/.

Provide Assistance

There are many ways that you can support a student or co-worker after an incident. Needs will vary from person to person. Here are some effective approaches:

For Students

● Give an extension on an assignment.
● Excuse an absence.
● Allow your student to come in early to class to choose a seat or leave early to avoid interacting with another person involved in the Title IX case.
● Provide an alternate workspace for an exam.
● Arrange remote participation in class.
● Approve an incomplete for a course.

For Co-Workers

● Reschedule a meeting or presentation.
● Assist with a project.
● Accompany your co-worker to University events that might be stressful.

References

https://titleix.utexas.edu/mandatory-reporters
https://titleix.utexas.edu/supporting-a-survivor