



Sexual assault

Assisting student survivors

A resource for faculty and staff responding to students who disclose that they have been sexually assaulted

What is sexual assault?

- Sexual assault is any unwanted sexual behaviour to which a person does not consent.
- Sexual assault is a crime. It can happen to anyone and is never the fault of the victim.
- Sexual assault can happen to anyone, of any age, sexual orientation, gender, cultural, ethnicity, or religious belief.

What to expect when someone discloses a sexual assault

The experience and impact of sexual assault is different for everyone but whatever the reaction, it is a normal response to an extreme emotional and physical violation.

Your role

Responding to and supporting someone who has been sexually assaulted can be complex, but chances are they have come to you because they trust you. By recognising, responding and referring survivors, you are letting them know that you care about them and want to help. Be compassionate, respectful, and supportive but remember that you are not expected to be the expert and that there is professional help available.

Assistance – for the student

1 Attend to safety

Determine if the person is in immediate danger and assure their safety. If someone is in immediate danger or needs urgent medical attention, call Emergency Services: 000. Call Campus Security on 9351 3333 to facilitate campus access for emergency services.

If the student is not in immediate danger, encourage the student to seek medical care and confirm they have somewhere safe to stay.

2 Listen and show your support

While a student may disclose a sexual assault to you, do not assume this means they wish to make a formal report. Support can still be provided either way.

- Listen without interrupting. Encourage the survivor to take their time if necessary.
- Do not encourage the survivor to provide you with specific details of the event. Direct them instead to the appropriate referral option.
- Respect the words they use in reference to the assault.
- Validate the survivor's experience by acknowledging their distress.
- Encourage the survivor to seek support and allow them to make their own decisions.
- Ask what you can do to be supportive. Ease any concerns the student might have about academic considerations in the moment.

“I’m here to listen and can help connect you to any support you feel you need.”

“The University of Sydney has places you can go to get information and confidential support.”

“Even if you don’t know what you want to do right now, it can be helpful to talk to someone about your options.”

3 Refer the student to the appropriate support services available to them

- Be sure the student is aware of the University of Sydney and community support services by providing the student with a copy of the factsheet – Sexual Assault | Support for student survivors.
- You don’t need to know or recommend which service the student might want to follow up with. Simply providing the options is support for the student.
- Offer to assist the student in connecting with one/some of the relevant support services to make an appointment.
- Ensure the student is aware of the online reporting form to disclose or make a complaint about an incident.
sydney.edu.au/students/sexual-assault/report-to-the-university

Assistance – for you

- Taking care of your own wellbeing is important. You can get counselling support through the University of Sydney Employee Assistance Program: 1300 089 972 (Available 24/7)
- If you’d like to speak with someone about how to refer a student to specific support services or to put the appropriate accommodations in place, please call University of Sydney Helpline on 1800 SYD HLP (1800 793 457).
- If you’d like to speak with someone for advice on how to support a student who has experienced sexual assault or harassment please contact the Student Liaison Officers on 8627 6808 or via email: safer-communities.officer@sydney.edu.au.