

## Tips for Responding to a Disclosure

Conversations around sexual harassment and misconduct are sensitive in nature and require care and compassion. If a student approaches you to talk about something difficult 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 he/she understands your reporting obligations. This is a tricky balance – 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’m here to help and I’m ready to listen. I know that it takes courage for you to share this with me and before you go forward, I need you to know there are certain things I have to share. 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.” *(The way you deliver this message is just as important as the words you say. Be sincere. Have an earnest face and a posture that conveys openness.)*

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

Some **helpful** things to do and say are...

- Listen without interrupting.
- Remain calm and concerned. Maintain eye contact.
- Do not worry about having to say just the right thing – just being there can help!
- Respect 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 and expression of feelings.
- Allow silence as silence means that the student is thinking and/or processing. This may also be an opportunity for you to think about how you can help and be there for the student.
- Believe and support the student. (Reflect what you are hearing: “That must have been tough/frightening/scary for you.”)
- Help the student identify one to two trusted support people. (“Even if you don’t know what you want to do right now, it can be helpful to talk to someone about your options.”)
- Ask what you can do to be supportive. (“Would you like for me to go with you to talk with someone?”)
- Ask if they want to get medical attention – no matter how long ago the assault occurred.
- Have an appropriate behavioral response. (Hugging or touching may be inappropriate, depending on the situation.)
- Ask yourself, “Am I doing everything in my power to create an intentionally safe environment for this student with my verbal and non-verbal language?”

Some things that are **not helpful** to do and say are...

- Asking “why” questions or questions that may imply blame and put the student on the defensive. (“Why were you there? Why did you go with them?”)
- Asking questions to satisfy your own curiosity, rather than asking questions to assess safety and figure out what options are the best to offer.
- 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. (Telling the student what to do, such as “you need to talk to a counselor.”)
- Saying, “It will be okay.” This is only allowed if you are indeed a certified psychic and can predict the future 100% of the time. You don’t know it will be okay, but you can be there with them in the present moment where it is safe.

If a student discloses information that you need to report, let him/her know you have to share the information with the Title IX Coordinator. You can assure the student that every effort will be made to respect his/her privacy and that the information may not go any further than the Title IX Coordinator. Let the student know what will happen next.

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

“I need to share this information with the Title IX Coordinator. They will do everything they can to maintain your privacy. You will be contacted to discuss options and what it would look like if you choose to file a complaint with the College, file a criminal complaint, or not file a complaint. You’ll also receive information on support services and ways the College can help.”

**After the conversation, you need to share the following information with the Title IX Coordinator:**

- Name of the student and other involved parties
- Information about the incident (date, nature of the incident, any details provided)
- Helpful information (for example, “the student wanted to talk with a counselor, so walked over to the Wellness Center”).

**You can share this information with the Title IX Coordinator in three different ways:**

1. In person
2. Over the phone at 407-691-1773
3. Via email to [slaake@rollins.edu](mailto:slaake@rollins.edu)
4. Online at [Rollins.edu/tixreporting](https://rollins.edu/tixreporting)

**It is important that this information is shared in a prompt fashion. Please complete the online reporting form, e-mail, call, or schedule a meeting immediately after talking to the student.**

**Title IX Coordinator Contact Information:**

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Cornell Campus Center, Suite 103  
1000 Holt Avenue, Box 2776  
Winter Park, FL 32789  
407-691-1773 | [slaake@rollins.edu](mailto:slaake@rollins.edu)  
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