

DURING COVID-19 & BEYOND: SUPPORTING STUDENTS HARMED BY SEXUAL OR RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE



As a faculty or staff member, you may receive disclosures from students about violence they have experienced. Use this guide to support them and connect them with resources.

IMPACTS OF SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

- > A student who is sexually assaulted by a friend may lose their support system when mutual friends take sides
- > A student who is harassed by a classmate may not participate in or show up to class
- > An abusive partner may read a student's texts and emails
- > A student who has been stalked may find turning on their camera during a Zoom class to be too reminiscent of being surveilled by the stalker
- > An abusive partner may sabotage a student's academics by damaging their computer, harassing them when they try to work, or using jealousy to prevent them from participating in group projects
- > A student who is sexually assaulted by a partner, family member, or roommate may lose their housing

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

It can be especially difficult, when working and teaching remotely, to recognize that a student may have experienced harm. While some of these circumstances could have a cause other than sexual violence, these are all situations that demonstrate that a student could use some support.

- > A student abruptly stops attending class
- > You notice someone in the background on Zoom and they appear to be monitoring the student's activities
- > A student mentions that their partner interfered in their ability to access or complete their school work in some way
- > The quality and/or timeliness of a student's work changes suddenly
- > You overhear a student make a vulgar or harassing comment directed at another student in a Zoom breakout room
- > A student appears distracted during class, like they're nervous or bothered by something
- > A student is visibly injured or seems to be concealing an injury
- > A student hesitates to have their camera turned on during class

A student might also tell you directly that they have been assaulted or harassed, or that they're in an abusive relationship.

RESPOND AND CONNECT

Whether you hear from a student directly, or something they do or say just signals that they need support, use the strategies below to respond.

- > **Email/Canvas:** If the student emails or messages you about an incident, refrain from asking for more details in writing. If the student is willing, find a time to talk in person or via phone or Zoom about what they need, in order to better protect their privacy. You might write back to them something like: *I'm sorry to hear what you're going through, and I'm here to support you. Can we find a time to talk about what you need? Let me know some times you're available and we can have a phone call.*
- > **In class or over Zoom:** If a student mentions something in a group setting that makes you feel concerned, acknowledge what they said and ask to check in one-on-one. Connect with the student in person, via private message on Zoom, or schedule a phone call to offer your support.

CONTACT THE VIOLENCE PREVENTION & ADVOCACY PROGRAM

The phone and email below are only checked by Confidential Advocates. An Advocate will answer your call if they're available. If you leave a message, they will return your call within one business day.

Phone: 425-352-3851

> Offer to call with the student by initiating a three-way call, or by being on Zoom with them while they call.

Email: uwbvae@uw.edu

> When referring a student, ask for their permission to send an introductory email. Copy this address and the student. Keep the message vague to protect the student's confidentiality. Say something like, "Hi [student], I'm introducing you here to the program we discussed. They have Confidential Advocates available to support you."

DEMONSTRATE CARE

Your goal when responding to a disclosure is to show the student that they're not alone. Try the following techniques to demonstrate care and concern to the student, and to get them warmly referred to support.

- > **Thank them:** Saying, "I appreciate that you trust me enough to share this with me," can go a long way, especially if you're the first person they've told.
- > **Set clear expectations:** Explain that you may need to reach out to other resources on the student's behalf if you're worried about their safety, and that if that's concerning to them, connect them directly with a Confidential Advocate.
- > **Let them lead:** Invite the student to decide how much or how little to tell you about what they've experienced. Refrain from asking questions that focus on details of the incident, and instead focus on how they're doing.

MAKE A WARM REFERRAL

Encourage the student to connect with a Confidential Advocate with UW Bothell's Violence Prevention & Advocacy Program (which serves Cascadia College students as well). A Confidential Advocate can offer confidential emotional support and can help the student explore their options and connect with other resources.

- > **Review the website together:** Ask the student if you can share your screen via Zoom so that you can look at some resources together. Show them the www.uwb.edu/sexualassault site and, in the Support section, play them the one-minute video that describes Advocacy.
- > **Empower:** Allow the student to share how they feel about connecting with an Advocate. Validate any concerns or worries that they have. Assure them that you know of students who have found Confidential Advocates to be a helpful resource. Remind the student that the decision to get support and to tell their story is completely up to them.
- > **Refer:** Ask the student how they'd prefer to connect with an Advocate. Offer to initiate a three-way call so that you can make an introduction or to write an email connecting the student with the Violence Prevention & Advocacy Program. If you write an email, check with the student first to make sure no one else has access to their email; if email isn't safe, refer by phone instead.

TIPS TO PREVENT HARASSMENT OVER ZOOM

Harassment over Zoom has become unfortunately common. Use these tips to create a safer environment for your students.

- > **Know your settings:** From your browser, go into your Zoom account and review every setting. Make sure you understand how to use all of the features available to you as the host, and be intentional about your default meeting settings.
- > **Use the waiting room:** By enabling the waiting room feature, you can control who actually joins the meeting or class. Before admitting someone, make sure they're supposed to be there. This strategy prevents potential "Zoom bombers" who could be known or unknown to those in the meeting or class.
- > **Use breakout rooms carefully:** Try to have a trusted monitor (a co-teacher, a TA, a colleague) in each breakout room. Consider offering extra credit for students to get training about how to be active bystanders to interrupt virtual harassment.
- > **Disable features that are often used to cause harm:** Unfortunately, it's common for people to use private messaging, annotations, screen sharing, and file transfers as means to perpetrate harassment. Private messages can be particularly harmful, since it might not be obvious to you that two or more students are messaging one another. Disable these functions to enhance everyone's safety.