

Responding to a disclosure of sexual violence

Disclosing an experience of sexual violence is the act of sharing information about an experience to someone who previously did not know. Individuals will often confide in the people they trust the most—a friend, peer, colleague, etc.

Disclosing is typically very difficult; some people are able to outright identify their experience while others may be more vague or use more general terms. It is important that the person receives a compassionate and supportive response to their disclosure, regardless if the experience was recent or in the past.

Note: A **disclosure** is the act of sharing information about an experience of sexual violence. A **complaint** is a disclosure for the purpose of initiating an investigation. For more information, visit: ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence/complaints.

Supportive listening

The following guidelines can be used when receiving a disclosure of sexual violence to encourage the person to talk about their experience, access supports, or make a complaint.

listen

Listen without judgment to create a safe environment for the person to talk about their experience.

believe

Most people who experience sexual violence are worried they won't be believed or that they will be blamed. Show you believe them by saying "I believe you."

ask how you can help

Ask "What can I do to help you?" to begin exploring the type of assistance that you and the community can provide.

explore options

Each person has the right to make their own decisions regarding their personal recovery and to have those choices respected. Ask the person what they would like to do. Their options include:

call or visit the U of A Sexual Assault Centre

2-705 SUB | 780-492-9771 | www.sac.ualberta.ca

- Free, confidential and anonymous support for students, faculty, and staff affected by sexual assault or abuse, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking.
- Free, comprehensive psychological services for survivors of sexual assault or abuse.
- Follow-up support and/or accompaniment service for those who seek medical attention, want to report their experience, or are involved in a campus or judicial complaint process.

seek medical attention

For general medical treatment, pregnancy, or STI/HIV concerns, consider:

Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) nurse
access through Edmonton-area emergency rooms within 7 days of the assault

University Health Centre
2-200 SUB | 780-492-2612

STI Clinic
11111 Jasper Ave. | 780-342-2300

Or visit a family physician

For emergency contraception, consider:

U of A Health Centre Pharmacy
1-20 SUB | 780-492-2634

Or visit any pharmacy

seek counselling and support

U of A Sexual Assault Centre
2-705 SUB | 780-492-9771

U of A Counselling and Clinical Services
2-600 SUB | 780-492-5205

Employee & Family Assistance Program
780-492-2249

Sexual Assault Centre of Edmonton (SACE)
Suite 205 – 14964 121A Ave. | 780-423-4102

24-hour Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACE)
780-423-4121

Interfaith Chaplains Association
780-492-0339

Talk with a trusted friend, family member, residence staff, or spiritual leader.

make a complaint

Edmonton Police Services
780-423-4567

University of Alberta Protective Services (UAPS)
Education Car Park | 780-492-5050

U of A Office of Safe Disclosure and Human Rights
300 Campus Tower | 780-492-7325

To report anonymously, contact the U of A Sexual Assault Centre
2-705 SUB | 780-492-9771

***Note:* A complaint is a disclosure made for the purpose of initiating an investigation under University policy. Not making a complaint is also a valid option.**

choose to do nothing

Each person will know which, if any, of these options are best for them. Choosing to do nothing is a valid option.

Unsure of how to help? Contact the U of A Sexual Assault Centre at **780-492-9771** or visit sac.ualberta.ca.

Learn more about responding to disclosures at ualberta.ca/campus-life/sexual-violence

Understanding sexual violence

The U of A takes its responsibilities seriously to reduce sexual violence by fostering a culture of consent and support through education, training and policy.

Sexual violence is a complex and serious problem that can affect individuals of all gender identities, gender expressions, and sexual orientations, as well as those from all ages, abilities, racial, cultural, and economic backgrounds.

Sexual violence is any sexual act, act of a sexual nature, or act targeting sexuality, physical or psychological, that is committed without consent.

It includes, but is not limited to the following:

Sexual Assault:

Any form of sexual contact without consent. This can include unwanted or forced 'kissing,' fondling, vaginal or anal penetration or touching, or oral sexual contact.

Sexual Harassment:

Conduct or comment of a sexual nature, which detrimentally affects the work, study, or living environment or otherwise leads to adverse consequences for the target of the sexual harassment. It can be either one-time or repeated and:

- is demeaning, intimidating, threatening, or abusive
- is not trivial or fleeting in nature
- causes offence and should have reasonably been expected to offend
- serves no legitimate purpose for the work, study or living environment
- undermines authority or respect in the work, study, or living environment, or impairs work or learning performance, or limits opportunities for advancement or the pursuit of education or research, or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work or learning environment

Indecent Exposure:

Exposing one's genitals, buttocks and/or breasts or inducing another to expose their own genitals, buttocks and/or breasts in non-consensual circumstances, in person or electronically.

Stalking:

Repeated unwanted contact or communication directed at another person that causes reasonable fear or concern for that person's safety or the safety of others known to them. The harm may be physical, emotional, or psychological, or related to the personal safety, property, education, or employment of an individual.

Stalking can occur physically, electronically, and/or through a third party.

Distribution of Intimate Images:

Includes showing, sharing, distributing or streaming of images, video or audio recording of a sexual activity or full or partial nudity of oneself or others, without the consent of all parties involved, or the threat to do the same.

Voyeurism:

Surreptitiously observing and/or recording another individual's full or partial nudity or sexual activity without the knowledge and consent of all parties involved.

Sexual violence also includes inducing intoxication, impairment, or incapacity for the purpose of making another person vulnerable to non-consensual sexual activity, and other analogous conduct.

Understanding consent

Consent is a voluntary, ongoing, active and conscious agreement to engage in the sexual activity in question. Consent or a "yes" that is obtained through pressure, coercion, force, threats or by inducing intoxication, impairment, or incapacity is not voluntary consent. Silence or ambiguity do not constitute consent.

Consent cannot be implied (for example, by a current or past relationship, by consent to another activity, or by failure to say "no" or resist). In addition, consent cannot be given in advance of sexual activity that is expected to occur at a later time.

It is the responsibility of the person wanting to engage in sexual activity to obtain clear consent from the other and to recognize that consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Additionally, there is no consent when:

- it is given by someone else.
- the person is unconscious, sleeping, highly intoxicated or high, or otherwise lacks the capacity to consent.
- it was obtained through the abuse of a position of power, trust or authority.
- the person does not indicate "yes", says "no" or implies "no" through words or behaviours.
- the person changes their mind and withdraws their consent.