

## *Best Practices for Implementing Your Role as a Mandated Reporter of Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence and Stalking*

### **Inform Students of Your Role as a Mandated Reporter**

Do your best to ensure that the student knows that you are a mandated reporter **before** they disclose an incident that you must report.

**When necessary, interrupt** students to inform them of your role. It can be hard to find the words to use. You might want to point to the door sign and ask them to read the section on telling staff or faculty, or show them the “What if I Tell My Story” option map for students. The key point to communicate is that you want students to be able to choose whether they want to speak with a mandated reporter or a confidential resource. **It will be awkward** to interrupt, but it is much more difficult to tell someone who wants confidentiality that you now must share their information with the Dean of Students. If possible, ask a colleague to roleplay a scene where you interrupt a student in crisis.

### **When a Student Chooses to Talk with You about Sexual Assault, Intimate Partner Violence or Stalking**

#### **Remember your role**

You are **not a counselor**, you are **not an investigator**, and you are **not called upon to name**, analyze, or define students’ experiences.

**You are a bridge** to connect the student with **Randi Darnall Burke**, our Dean of Students, who will provide the survivor with options for support, accommodations and accountability. We also encourage you to provide the student with immediate information about **HSU’s Campus Advocate Team** (provided by North Coast Rape Crisis Team) and other 24 hour resources for support. Counseling and Psychological Services and Humboldt Domestic Violence Services also have 24 hour crisis lines.

#### **Keep the survivor’s needs and feelings at the center of the process**

**Do listen respectfully and support the student.** Very few people lie about sexual assault or rape. In fact, there is severe under-reporting of these crimes. Consider how difficult it is to recount trauma, and by extension often re-live it, by talking about an experience of sexual violence. Your ability to listen and respond in nonjudgmental ways can help to change the culture of silence that exists around sexualized violence.

**Do let the survivor know that you care**, using a calm and compassionate tone.

Do say something like, “I’m so sorry that you have to go through this.”

**Don’t overly express your own feelings** about what happened to them.

Don’t say, “It’s outrageous that you’ve had to experience this!”

Remember: if we react with shock and outrage we may silence survivors. Survivors will often shift away from identifying and discussing their own needs to responding to our reaction. If met with an overly emotional response, survivors may feel like they have to take care of us.

**Do acknowledge your non-verbal expressions, when appropriate:** If a strong emotion flickers across your face as you listen, e.g., if you know that anger passed over your face, do acknowledge it.

Do say (in a calm voice) something like, “If you saw anger on my face I just want you to know that I wasn’t angry at you; I felt anger at the fact that someone would choose to harm you.”

**Don’t define their experience for them.**

Don’t say, “Well, it sounds to me like you were raped!”

**Do use the words the survivor uses** to describe their experience. If they say rape, don’t interrogate them about what they mean. If they say “taken advantage of” or “violated” use those words, or other general terms such as “harm.”

*Do validate that what happened to them was not ok. Do say something like, “I am so sorry that person harmed you.”*

Remember: **none of us have the magic words** that will support survivors in all contexts. Even from the best of intentions we might say something hurtful. If you see that what you said caused the survivor to become upset, acknowledge this. You might say something like, “I think what I said just made this harder for you.”

### **Establish clear boundaries and be a bridge to forms of support**

***Offer forms of support that are appropriate for your role:*** Let the survivor know what you can realistically offer to support them. For instance, if you are a faculty member you can, if you choose, offer extensions on deadlines for course work. Or you can refer them to Randi to explore options of late withdrawal from your class if the violence is impairing their ability to pass your class. If you are a supervisor of a student employee, let them know if there are options for taking time off and/or rearranging their work schedule.

***For support that is needed beyond your role, serve as a bridge to campus and community support and resources***

Don't say: “I’ll be there for you in whatever way you need.”

Do say: “We have campus and community resources to help support you. Here’s a resource sheet with 24 hour numbers for our Campus Advocate Team, CAPS, and HDVS.”

Don't say: “I’ll show up at the court case.”

Do say: “If you would like to have someone with you at the court case, our Campus Advocate Team will be able to tell you the options for advocates who can go with you.”

Don't say: “I’ll make sure justice will be served.”

Do say: “Randi and the Campus Advocate Team will help to make sure you are connected with the people who can assist you throughout the process.”

### **If a Student discloses committing an act of violence**

Call Randi to let her know that you have reason to believe a student has committed sexual assault, intimate partner violence or stalking. Do not let the student know you are reporting to Randi, as this could interfere with the investigation and/or could result in retaliation.

### **Keep the Student’s Information Private**

After fulfilling your responsibilities to report to Randi, if the topic of a student survivor’s performance as an employee or success in the major comes up in department meetings, provide the minimum information you can in order to support the student. Don't say: Since she was raped she’s been struggling in my class/late to work.

Do say: She is in the midst of a significant crisis.

If you need to talk about the impact **on you** of hearing about this student’s trauma, please call the Campus Advocate Team or CAPS for support, rather than speaking to colleagues.

### **Confidential Resources for Survivors**

Options for students to talk with someone confidentially include the following people and organizations:

#### **HSU’s Campus Advocate Team**

#### **Provided by North Coast Rape Crisis Team**

*(707) 445-2881, 24-hour crisis/support line*

*By letting NCRCT know you are an HSU community member you’ll have access to more options for support.*

#### **HSU’s Counseling & Psychological Services**

*M-F 8-5 crisis counseling;*

*(707) 826-3236, 24 hour crisis line*

#### **Humboldt Domestic Violence Services**

*(707) 443-6042, 24-hour hotline*

#### **University Police Department**

*(707) 826-5555*