



First Responder Training

RESOURCES FROM FIRST RESPONDER DISCLOSURE TRAINING



Brief Overview to assist those who are involved in a disclosure

(NB: First Responder Training will cover the complexities of this information)

Barriers to disclosure

- Ignorance of reporting procedures
- Embarrassment and shame, they fear they would accrue as a result

- Normalisation in society of particularly ‘low-level’ acts of sexual misconduct, meaning disclosures will not be taken seriously (particularly for female students)
- Misunderstanding that acts of sexual misconduct are not under a university’s purview to investigate and punish
- Previous bad experiences of reporting (judgmental, victim-blaming etc.)

AMOSSHE report 2018: Student’s expectations of university responses to sexual misconduct disclosures: a qualitative study in three UK universities

Expectations on disclosure

Immediate expectations upon making a disclosure inclusive of sexual misconduct, are individual to each person, and how a first responder supports upon disclosure should be led by the person disclosing.

However, there was an overwhelming consensus amongst all participants that ‘reactions’ to disclosures needed to tread a fine line between ‘compassionate’ and ‘professional’. They want responses that are warm and human, but not over-emotional or pitying.

Guidelines for active listening:

- Be tentative and offer **your impression** of what they said
- Avoid telling, informing or defining the other person.
- Be respectful, don’t judge, dismiss or use sarcasm
- Try and tune into the other person’s language.
- Listen to the depth of feeling expressed in the persons voice and reflect accordingly in your response.
- Be genuine and don’t pretend you understand if you do not
- Be brief and direct.

Always defer to the other person if corrected – this is not a mistake on your part

Responding to disclosures inclusive of sexual harassment, assault or rape

Do’s and Don’ts for the First Responder

DO	DON’T
React calmly	Probe them with questions about the incident
Listen carefully and attentively	Promise to keep anything secret
Invite them to talk if they want, and ask open questions	Give opinions or make judgments on anyone’s behavior (theirs or the perpetrator)
Reassure them that you are glad they told you, and they were right to do so	Rush or panic

Let them know you will take them seriously, and will accept their account without questioning it	Tell them what they should do or encourage them to report
Remember to keep an open mind about sexual violence – that it can take many forms, can happen to anyone, and everyone’s response is individual	Make any promises about what might happen or what outcome they can expect if they make a report – <i>just say you don’t know.</i>
Check in with what they need both now and in future, to feel OK/safe	Assume you know what’s best for them
Use grounding and breathing exercises if they are overwhelmed	Tell them everything will be OK, or minimise what happened.
Offer signposting for further support or for taking further action	Express surprise or disbelief
Ensure they are in full control over what happens next	Try to fix it

A disclosure can happen anytime, anywhere – in person or online, at work or out socially. **If possible, try to find a safe place to discuss it undisturbed.**

Make a written record of the conversation afterwards, as accurately as possible. This is to ensure that the disclosure has been documented in case evidence is required in future. Do not document your thoughts, feelings or opinions. Only the facts of what was discussed, including the date and whether anyone else was present.

If someone comes to you in your position as a first responder **immediately after being assaulted or raped**, you can find information on how to offer them safety and support in the immediate future at appendix c – with information from the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC).

Knowledge and Information for Referral

Making a plan and signposting

As first responder, it is not your job to know everything or to provide continuous support.

It is your job to respond compassionately, and then to point them in the direction of those who know more, or those who can provide the ongoing support.

Many people who experience sexual violence will not want to make any official report of the incident. It is essential that we respect this wish and allow them to remain in full control. We are under no obligation to report the incident ourselves (either to College or to the Gardai) and should never do so without the consent of the person.

For most, your role as a First Responder is to point them in the direction of support services.

Remember you are assisting in your capacity as a first responder, which means information disclosed is **confidential to the service**, not to you as an individual. **This means you can discuss the situation with a member of the counselling services confidentially, for support and assistance if required.**

Making a Report

Some people will wish to report the incident of sexual violence, and as a first responder you can give them some information on how to do so.

Sexual harassment is dealt with under the Dignity and Respect Policy (<https://www.tcd.ie/hr/assets/pdf/dignity-and-respect.pdf>).

If a student wishes to make a complaint of sexual harassment, their first step should be to talk to one of the Dignity and Respect Contact Persons. These are Trinity staff members whose role is to listen with sensitivity, to advise on the relevant options under the policy, and to assist as appropriate. Any conversations with them are entirely confidential, and do not tie the student to making a complaint later. The list of contact persons is available at <http://www.tcd.ie/equality/policy/dignity-respect-policy/>.

As first responder, you do not need to know all the details of the Dignity and Respect Policy. There are already members of the College who are trained to provide this information and support, and you can direct the student to one of these in relevant cases. A summary of the three options, taken from the D&R policy is included in appendix B.

Sexual assault and rape are not dealt with under the Dignity and Respect policy. Students who have experienced sexual assault or rape should contact the Junior Dean.

To report to the Gardai

Remember that the decision to advance a report should only be made by the person in question and they should **never** be pressured into doing so if they don't want to.

Call your local Garda station or report in person

Bring a support person with you or contact victim support groups (csc.ie) to accompany you

Contact your local Rape Crisis Centre – 1800 778888

Sexual Assault Treatment Units – if you have been the victim of sexual assault in the last 7 days with or without Garda accompaniment

Comprehensive medical, psychological and forensic care will be available.

If you wish, this evidence can be retained for a year while you consider whether or not you want to report a crime.

www.hse.ie/satu

If you do not wish to report a crime to the Gardai, you may attend a sexual assault unit Mon – Fri 9-5pm to receive medical and psychological care – no forensic samples will be taken.

Supporting Perpetrators

Advise them:

1. Not to panic
2. That asking questions about the complaint's procedure will *never* be linked to an assumption of guilt
 - a. If the complaint could be a criminal offence, they may want to seek legal advice
3. Direct them to support services
 - a. It is IMPERATIVE that during the process the responding student has access to emotional support services
4. That they will be informed if an investigation which includes them is ongoing.

What Happens after a college investigation?

Regardless of what has taken place, both the complainant and respondent may be distressed, and any future interaction may be difficult. State that they could consider the options of 'buffer zones' with the college services.

Appendix A: Index of Supports

TCD Supports

Service	Contact	Website
Assistant Junior Deans (on-	cdeans@tcd.ie (01) 896 1551	https://www.tcd.ie/Junior_Dean/junior-dean/

campus support)		
Assistant Wardens (Trinity Halls support)	+353 1 896 8024 trinity.hall@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/Junior_Dean/warden-of-trinity-hall/assistant-wardens/
Campus security (24 hour)	+353 1 896 1999	https://www.tcd.ie/estatesandfacilities/facilities-and-services/campus-services/security/
Chaplaincy	chaplaincy@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/Chaplaincy/
College Health Centre	(01) 896-1591	https://www.tcd.ie/collegehealth/
Equality Office	+353-1-896-4352 equality@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/equality/
Global Room (international students)	(01) 896 2097 tcdglobalroom@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/study/international/trinity-life/global-room/
Nursery	(01) 896 1938 coxao@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/about/services/daynursery/
Postgraduate Advisory Service	postgrad.support@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/postgraduateadvisory/
Student Counselling Service	+353 1 896 1407 student-counselling@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/Student_Counselling/
Student Learning and Development	01 8961407	http://student-learning.tcd.ie/
Student2Student Peer Support	student2student@tcd.ie	http://student2student.tcd.ie/peer-support/
TCD Disability Services	Email: askds@tcd.ie Phone: 01 896 3111 Text: 087 113 3185	https://www.tcd.ie/disability/
TCDSU Welfare Officer	welfare@tcdsu.org	https://www.tcdsu.org/welfare
Tutors Service	(01) 896-2551 St.office@tcd.ie	https://www.tcd.ie/Senior_Tutor/your-tutor/

External Supports

Service	Contact	Website
Crime Victims Helpline	Freephone 166066 Text 085 133 7711 Email https://www.crimevictimshelpline.ie/how-we-help#getInTouch	https://www.crimevictimshelpline.ie/
Rape Crisis Centre	24-hour helpline 1800 77 8888 counselling@rcc.ie Text 086-8238443	https://www.drcc.ie/services/helpline/
Niteline 9pm -2am	1800 793 793	https://niteline.ie/
Samaritans	Helpline (24hr): 116 123	https://www.samaritans.org/ireland/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/
Pearse Street Garda Station	(01) 666 9000	https://www.garda.ie/en/contact-us/station-directory/pearse-street.html
SpunOut Text Line	Text TALK to 086 1800 280	https://spunout.ie/news/article/text-message-support-service
Alcoholics Anonymous	Phone: 01 4538998 Email: gso@alcoholicsanonymous.ie	http://www.alcoholicsanonymous.ie/
Positive Options Crisis Pregnancy	Free text LIST to 50444	http://www.positiveoptions.ie/
Women's Aid Domestic Abuse	1800 341 900	https://www.womensaid.ie/
LGBT Helpline	1890 929 539 Email: info@lgbt.ie	http://lgbt.ie/

Appendix B: Dignity and Respect outline

Option 1: Informal Process

Where appropriate, complaints can be dealt with informally. For example, you might let the person(s) who have harassed you know that their behaviour is unwelcome, and that it must not happen again. In some cases, they may not have realised the impact of their behaviour and will desist as soon as they are informed.

Your Contact Person can help you prepare for this kind of meeting with your harasser. If you don't feel comfortable addressing them directly, a Contact Person or your Tutor / Postgraduate Advisor may speak with them on your behalf.

There are no formal records kept of informal processes, except for brief anonymous records kept by Contact Persons for statistical reporting purposes. An informal complaint will have no disciplinary consequence for the harasser.

Option 2: Mediation

You may wish to consider mediation (either after trying the informal process, or instead of it). Both parties (i.e. yourself and the harasser) must be willing to participate in the mediation.

Mediation is a process through which parties discuss their dispute with the assistance of a trained, impartial third person (mediator) who helps them to reach a settlement. Every mediation process, therefore, is different and will have different outcomes. However, it is not a disciplinary process and as such cannot have any disciplinary consequence for the harasser.

A mediator is hired from outside College; this is arranged by HR, but the service is equally available to students.

Option 3: Formal Process

If informal (or mediation) resolution cannot be found or would not be appropriate given the seriousness of the complaint, you are entitled to make a formal complaint, which may have disciplinary consequences for the harasser.

You should always consult with a Contact Person before making a formal complaint.

To make a formal complaint, you must set out the details of your complaint in writing to your Tutor / Postgraduate Advisor (or Head of Department / School if more suitable). You should be as specific as possible, including dates and times of incidences, and the names of any witnesses to each incidence.

Your written account will be forwarded to the harasser to give them the right of reply. Likewise, you will receive a copy of their written response to your complaint. Further written correspondence may be exchanged, and the issue may be resolved through the correspondence.

If the issue isn't resolved, an investigator (Trinity staff member) will be appointed. You'll receive a letter setting out the terms of reference and the process for the investigation.

The investigator will communicate their decision to all parties; this may involve some disciplinary repercussion for the harasser.

Appendix C: From Issues in the Aftermath of Rape: Working Sensitive with Victims of Rape and Sexual Assault *Dublin Rape Crisis*

Supporting the victim of rape or sexual assault in the aftermath

The role of the supporter in the immediate crisis situation

How a person reacts to the trauma of rape or sexual assault is very individual, and the person offering support needs to respond to the individual in ways which are sensitive and appropriate to how they are presenting. In the immediate aftermath the individual may be:

- * Shocked, withdrawn, frozen
- * In denial - being unable to take in that it really happened
- * Panicked, confused and bewildered
- * Hysterical and crying
- * Laughing and giggling
- * Very calm and rational
- * Angry and upset

The person may move through each of these states, for example appearing very calm at first but then becoming shaky and tearful, then angry, then calm again. It is the role of the supporter to accurately empathize with how *this* individual is reacting, and **to suspend any judgements** based on the supporter's own internalized attitudes or beliefs about how a person would or should be after such an experience.

The person may want to talk about the detail of what happened, but often may not want to talk about it at all. They may be most concerned with an issue such as keeping the information from family, or how a partner will react, and this may be what you need to listen to.

The supporter is the one who is not in crisis. It is their role to appear calm. Just as in any more everyday crisis, it is helpful and reassuring if the other person appears calm, grounded, sensible and takes responsibility for thinking through the practical issues.

The supporter needs to be mindful of the surroundings and try and provide privacy for the individual who may be unaware of being overheard, or that others are nearby.

It is important that the supporter validates the other person during this time when their confidence and self-esteem is shaken and low. This generates a sense of hope and possibility. This does not involve anything that minimises the client's suffering, but while acknowledging it, focuses on the client's strengths and supports.

There is a deeply important real value in finding ways of treating the person with dignity: these may be small and subtle but are of immense value at this time.

- How the supporter speaks to the person: language, tone?
- Asking what they would like or prefer.
- Treating the person as an adult.
- Intervening if necessary, to ensure the person is treated with dignity by medical staff or others.
- Eye contact

Health issues and the need for medical attention in the immediate aftermath of suspected rape:

- the possibility of injury, both internal and external
- The possibility of infection including the possibility of HIV infection, and the need for a prophylactic
- Pregnancy and pregnancy prevention: the Morning After Pill needs to be taken within 72 hours and is most effective for the first 48 hours

Support: is there someone who can be there later?

Safety: Where is the perpetrator and what danger is there? Where is the victim, if on the phone, and is it safe? Will there be danger later?

Legal issues: does the person want to report to Gardaí? If so the supporter can talk them through the first steps in the process and alert them to issues re forensic evidence: not washing, not drinking, preserving clothes

If the person will be attending for forensic examination, alerting them to issues re bringing change of clothes and shoes, as these may be retained.

In the aftermath of a trauma such as rape, a gentle authoritative directness about self care and support allows the client to feel held. The supporter can draw their attention to their needs, and gently focus on how these can be met.

Normalising

A crucial role for the supporter is that of normalising the impact. Often a person feels they are going mad, feel that their body is betraying them, feel out of control.

It is also crucial that the supporter conveys the message that while people react like this to trauma, they also recover their coping strategies, and that there are tried and tested ways of coping with and managing and from recovering from these symptoms.

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