Supporting Survivors of Interpersonal Violence

A Guide for Faculty and Staff

What to do:

Research shows that the response of the person to whom a survivor makes an initial disclosure has a significant effect on their healing process. In addition to letting the student know you must report, you should also provide information about Project Hope and Western’s Counseling Center as confidential resources that can assist the student in processing their experience and navigating the various resources and systems.

What to say:

“Thank you for telling me. I am here to help you.”

“Are you aware of the reporting requirements on campus? Can I explain them to you?”

“Are you aware of the resources available to you?”

“What can I do to help you feel safe right now?”

10 Tips for making your courses more supportive for survivors

1. Practice what you would do if a student disclosed to you. Do you know supportive phrases to respond with? Do you understand reporting processes? Can you explain them clearly?

2. Do not assign small groups if possible, let students choose. This allows students to work with those they feel safe with.

3. Your TA’s are Responsible Employees as well, make sure they understand their reporting responsibilities.

4. It is never appropriate to comment on a student’s clothing as revealing, distracting, or something of the like. This can be considered a hostile environment and is a Title IX violation.

5. When holding office hours and meetings with students, allow them the opportunity to meet with you in a public place. Always ask to close the door during a private meeting.

6. Provide trigger warnings on syllabi with respect to sensitive content.

7. Provide a link to Western’s Sexual Harassment Policy in your syllabi.

8. Realize nighttime can be triggering for some survivors. Take this into account during evening classes and daylight saving time.

9. Avoid colloquial language that can support rape cultures or victim blaming.

10. Educate yourself and practice your skills!

Title IX Administrator

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1 in 4 WOMEN
1 in 16 MEN
1 in 2 TRANSGENDERED STUDENTS
Will experience sexual violence during their college career
Do you know and understand your role?

Your role is an important one. Faculty, Staff and Student Staff at Western are required by law to report any form of sexual misconduct under Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972. It is best to mention your role as a mandated reported on your syllabus.

Interpersonal Violence can have an impact on Academic Success

After experiencing trauma, many students fail classes or transfer to other universities. Having an understanding of what a survivor might be going through can help you to support them in their healing process and ultimately toward earning their degree.

What might a survivor be going through?

- Difficulty concentrating or focusing as well as nightmare, sleep and eating disturbances which can affect academics significantly, both in and out of class.
- Flashbacks—feelings of reliving or experiencing the event
- Intrusive memories—uncontrollable repetitive thoughts
- Withdrawal from people and places in one’s life
- Fear for physical safety, particularly when students are experiencing stalking or harassment from perpetrators
- Despite the fact that the FBI reports that false reports make up only 2-10% of all reports, students often have a fear of judgement and worry that they will not be believed
- A students identity (race, gender, class, sexuality, religion, etc.) may affect the way a student responds to trauma and how they feel about disclosing trauma to others
- The respondent may share a class, friend group or residence with the complainant

Confidential Advocates are Available

At Project Hope, advocates are available to provide support, resources, and information to survivors of sexual assault, relationship violence and stalking.

Office: (970).641.2712
Crisis Line: (970).275.1193

80% of campus sexual assaults are perpetrated by an acquaintance of the victim