

# Responding to student disclosures of sexual misconduct and sexual violence

## A guide for faculty, staff, and teaching assistants

Last updated: March 2026

### What you need to know

Sexual violence is any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity and/or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, regardless of the nature or status of any relationship between the individuals involved. It includes such things as:

- sexual assault
- sexual harassment
- stalking
- indecent exposure
- voyeurism
- sexual exploitation

You may be the first to hear about an experience of sexual misconduct or sexual violence from a student. You may be asked to provide the appropriate considerations, accommodations, make referrals, or otherwise support a student in need. Students who have experienced Intimate Partner Violence also should be referred to SVPRS.

Take the time to familiarize yourself with the most recent versions of policies and procedures with application across the University on matters of sexual misconduct and sexual violence involving Queen's University students. Managers and Directors should ensure members of their team understand their obligations.

### Sexual violence and students

The existence of intersecting systems of oppression in our community means some students may be more vulnerable than others to sexual violence. All students are entitled to equitable treatment. You may hear about an occurrence of sexual violence from a survivor, bystander, housemate, teammate, or perpetrator.

Please see page 4 for what to do if you receive a disclosure from a student who believes they may have perpetrated sexual violence.



**HUMAN RIGHTS  
AND EQUITY OFFICE**  
Sexual Violence  
Prevention and Response

Mackintosh-Corry Hall 5<sup>th</sup> floor • Human Rights & Equity Office  
Queen's University, Kingston, ON

T: 613.533.6000 x 36330 Email [bjl7@queensu.ca](mailto:bjl7@queensu.ca) to consult.

## Student rights

Students who have experienced sexual violence or IPV can access all campus support services and receive considerations and/or accommodations regardless of when or where the incident occurred. Disclosure and access to support, services, and accommodations are possible without filing a complaint either with the University or with police. Students who have experienced Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) also should be referred to SVPRS for support, safety planning and information about options.

### Limits of confidentiality

When a student discloses sexual violence, confidentiality must be protected to the fullest extent possible, but cannot be maintained where sharing of information is required to ensure health and safety. You may need to share information about a student's disclosure if:

- the student is at risk of self-harm
- an individual may pose a threat or risk to a student who has disclosed sexual violence
- there is a potential risk to other members of the University or the broader community
- reporting is required by law (e.g., involves a minor)
- the University has an obligation to investigate



**Inform the student about the possible limits to confidentiality. Let them know that you will be discrete when confidentiality is not an option.**

The Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Involving Students permits consultation with the Manager, Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Services (SVPRS) to determine the next steps, offer support to the disclosing student, assist other affected students, and address your own needs.

Students making a disclosure must be informed about the support services available and about the existence of the Policy. Employees are required, as per policy, to notify the SVPRS when they receive a student disclosure. The student's name should only be shared if consent has been given. Be prepared to discuss whether the student wishes to share identifying information with the SVPRS for the purpose of receiving additional support. Sharing information about SVPR Services and supports offered will be helpful in obtaining informed consent for a direct referral.

Students do not require a direct referral and can reach out directly to the SVPRS for information about options and next steps. Employees can access the secure Notification Form at [queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport/faculty-and-staff](https://queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport/faculty-and-staff)

For further details on employee responsibilities, consult the Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Involving Students.

Employees hearing a student's disclosure related to another employee's behavior should consult the Manager, SVPRS for guidance on additional response options. The Notification Form is required regardless of who is alleged to have caused harm.

Employees may have responsibilities to report harassment or violence in the workplace under the University Harassment and Discrimination Policy.



Learn more at



[queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport/policies-committees-reports](https://queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport/policies-committees-reports)

## What to say and do

Experiences of violence impact everyone differently. There is no right, wrong, or normal way for a survivor to react. You may witness many different emotions and behaviours from a student who has experienced sexual violence or IPV.

A survivor may experience:

- shock
- disbelief
- confusion
- denial
- anger
- sadness
- fear
- depression
- anxiety
- guilt
- difficulty concentrating
- feelings of helplessness or hopelessness
- suicidal thoughts
- sleep disturbances

Students may isolate from their social group, avoid areas on campus or in the community where they no longer feel safe (e.g., library, residence, own room, dining hall, meetings, events, restaurants, main streets, and community and faith groups), or feel that they must leave their job or limit their academic, athletic, or club activities due to the potential presence of the perpetrator.

The SVPR Advisor may make referrals to both on and off campus resources, discuss and facilitate appropriate considerations/accommodations, and provide information about submitting a Complaint under the Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Involving Students.

**A positive first response to a disclosure of sexual violence or IPV can have a profound effect on the survivor's decision to seek out further support. You are one point of contact in their process of recovery. Your role as a first responder is to recognize, respond, and refer.**

### DO

- ✓ listen with care and empathy
- ✓ be aware of your nonverbal response
- ✓ respect personal space (do not touch the student)
- ✓ facilitate referrals
- ✓ consult the Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Violence Policy
- ✓ inform student(s) of your obligations per the Policy
- ✓ recognize your limits
- ✓ take care of yourself and your own mental health

### DO NOT

- ✗ act without consent
- ✗ compromise the students' safety
- ✗ ask questions out of curiosity
- ✗ tell the student what is normal
- ✗ blame the survivor
- ✗ take sides
- ✗ tell the student what to do
- ✗ call services without consulting the student
- ✗ discount the experience if substances were involved

### You may say:

- How can I help?
- Is this a good place to talk?
- It is not your fault.
- Thank you for sharing this with me.
- I respect your decision. These services are here for you if you would like them.
- I'd like you know that you have options.
- Do you feel comfortable in this space?
- Talk when you are ready.

## Remember

- Show that you are actively listening (nodding, facing in their direction, and sitting down at eye level)
- Never assume a survivor's course of action
- Have patience
- You can consult with the SVPRS Manager

## Recognize

- Determine and address immediate safety needs for yourself and the student
- Be cognizant of your personal limits as a support person

Students who are alleged to have committed sexual violence should be supported and referred to the Ombudsperson and to Student Wellness Services.

## Respond

- Be compassionate and non-judgmental
- Be patient and give your undivided attention
- Respect their decisions

## Refer

- Direct the student to the SVPRS to discuss options and next steps (this includes students who have disclosed IPV)
- Provide information about other services/resources

The University recognizes that individuals affected by sexual violence are integral decision-makers in situations pertaining to themselves.

To access sexual violence prevention and response resources, consult the SVPRS website: [queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport](https://queensu.ca/sexualviolencesupport)

## Resources

Manager, Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Services  
[bjl7@queensu.ca](mailto:bjl7@queensu.ca) (preferred) • 613.533.6000 x 36330

Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Services - Advising  
If desired, students can self-refer  
Email [SVPRServices@queensu.ca](mailto:SVPRServices@queensu.ca)

Student Wellness Services  
613.533.2506 • [counselling.services@queensu.ca](mailto:counselling.services@queensu.ca)  
[queensu.ca/studentwellness](https://queensu.ca/studentwellness)

University Ombudsperson  
613.533.6495 • [queensu.ca/ombuds](https://queensu.ca/ombuds)

Sexual Assault/Domestic Violence Program  
Attend in person, KHSC Kingston General Hospital  
Emergency Department (medical care/treatment, forensic evidence collection)

Campus Security and Emergency Services  
24/7 Emergency Report Center 613.533.6111  
General Inquiries 613.533.6733

Kingston Police, 24/7 • 911 (emergencies)  
613.549.4660 (non-emergencies)  
[www.kingstonpolice.ca](https://www.kingstonpolice.ca)

Sexual Assault Centre Kingston, 24/7  
1.877.544.6424 • [webelievesurvivors.ca](https://webelievesurvivors.ca)

