




VICTIM ADVOCACY RESOURCES

*for USF St. Petersburg
Faculty and Staff*

**Together, we can work to create a
community of care.**



ADVOCACY STARTS WITH YOU

Why staff and faculty?

University faculty and staff play an important role in preventing, addressing, and ending violence on campus. Faculty and staff interact with students on a daily basis, can serve as confidants, and may witness important behavior changes.

Thank you for your commitment to a safer campus for all students, staff and faculty. Your support of victim advocacy and violence prevention efforts across campus is a vital ingredient to ensuring that fewer members of the campus community experience sexual assault, partner violence and stalking.

This resource guide outlines several ways you can support students who have experienced a crime in your role in concrete and manageable ways. We understand that your life is incredibly busy and your role on campus is demanding. For that reason (among others) we appreciate your willingness and readiness to support our efforts to prevent violence, improve safety and thereby improve the quality of education and campus experience for all students.

In an attempt to minimize the burden of adding more to your already full plate, we have compiled this toolkit in the hopes of offering suggestions, some simple and some more involved, so that you can contribute to a safer campus community in whatever capacity makes sense for you.

Many thanks,

Wellness Center

USF St. Petersburg

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Disclaimer

This is not meant to be an exhaustive resource, but simply an introduction to supporting students who have experienced crime and/or trauma. After reviewing the contents of this toolkit, we welcome you to reach out for questions, concerns, or consultation.

Thank you, in advance, for your time and support to create a community of care at the University of South Florida - St. Petersburg campus.

Key Terms

1. Confidential/Confidentiality

- a. Information shared will not be disclosed to anyone without your written permission as required by Florida law.
- b. Exceptions to this standard of confidentiality do exist. Under the circumstances stated below, there is a legal obligation to share with relevant authorities the pertinent information that is disclosed:
 - i. If you disclose you are an imminent danger to yourself or someone else,
 - ii. if you report any suspected or actual abuse of a minor, persons over the age of 60 or persons with developmental disabilities, or
 - iii. if a court of law were to subpoena this information.

2. Reporting

- a. University reporting includes Title IX and Student Conduct and Ethical Development. These reports stay internal to the University's processes and systems and are based on internal policies and procedures.
- b. Law Enforcement reporting, including the University Police department, is an external University process that includes the criminal and civil legal systems. These reports follow state laws and regulations.

3. Responsible Employee

- a. An employee of USF who is obligated by policy (*0-004 Sexual Misconduct/Sexual Harassment*) to share knowledge, notice, and/or reports of harassment, discrimination, and/or retaliation with the Title IX Coordinator.
- b. Responsible Employees, unless specifically exempted as noted below, are required to promptly report within 24 hours allegations or instances of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, by or against any USF employee(s), student(s), or group(s) to the Title IX Coordinator. The University Police Department (UPD) is required to promptly report to the Title IX Coordinator a complaint of sexual harassment, including sexual violence, at the time a person directly files a complaint with UPD, UPD becomes aware of the alleged incident, or at the conclusion of any UPD process. Failure to make the Report may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment. In addition to mandatory reporting, the Responsible Employee must provide the victim (if applicable) or the disclosing person information about confidential advocacy, counseling, or other support services, as well as the right to file a Title IX complaint to the Title IX Coordinator and/or report a crime to law enforcement.

What is a Victim Advocate?

An advocate with the Wellness Center is a professional who is trained to respond with compassion and expertise to the victims of crime, violence, and abuse.

This includes crisis intervention, advocacy and accompaniment, safety planning, academic and housing assistance, and nonjudgmental support to victims to help them get through the experience and regain control of their lives.

The Victim Advocate is available year-round and can provide a number of confidential services for students, including:

- Accompaniment to medical/forensic exams, court proceedings, University hearings, and more
- Academic support
- Housing assistance
- Providing campus and community referral
- Providing information and assistance with filing reports on or off-campus and navigating the legal and Title IX process.

CONSULTATION SERVICES AVAILABLE TO ALL USF ST. PETERSBURG STUDENTS 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK 727-873-4422

Victim's Bill of Rights

Crimes can occur in a multitude of ways but some of the most common include domestic violence, relationship/dating violence, sexual violence, sexual harassment, and stalking.

Sometimes you may not know the exact crime you are experiencing but our advocate is here to help.

You have rights as a victim, which are:

- To be free from intimidation
- To receive notification of court proceedings.
- To be present at court hearings accompanied by a victim advocate.
- To have emotional and physical support.
- To be told of services within the community.
- To be aware of compensation/ restitution.
- To complete a victim impact statement.
- To be treated with respect and dignity.

Responding to Disclosures

As a responsible employee, you are mandated to report any disclosure of sexual violence, dating/domestic violence or stalking to Title IX. If you feel someone is going to disclose any information it would be best to interrupt and disclose your reporting responsibilities so the survivor can make an informed decision to continue the conversation.

How to support students during a disclosure

If you believe a student may disclose an incident that would require you to report, you can also preface the conversation to ensure the student knows your responsibility.

"Thank you for coming to talk to me. Before you start talking to me about anything sensitive, I want to make sure you know that I have certain reporting obligations as a faculty/staff member. I am obligated to report to university officials any information I receive about discrimination or harassment, including sexual harassment and sexual misconduct/assault. If you would like to speak to someone confidentially at USF St. Petersburg, then you can go to the Wellness Center and speak with a victim advocate, a counselor, or a medical professional."

If a student has stated interest in being connected with a Victim Advocate, you can send an email with the following information:

How to refer a student to Victim Advocacy

If a student has stated interest in being connected with a Victim Advocate, you can send an email with the following information:

"I am working with a student who would like to speak with a Victim Advocate. Their name is _____ (U XXXX - XXXX) and they mentioned that the best method of contact is via phone/email. They can be reached at XXX - XXX - XXXX/email@address.com. They asked that you leave a voicemail in the event that they do not answer. Please let me know if you have any questions."

Supporting a Survivor: The Basics

For a lot of people, the idea of supporting someone who has experienced a crime or trauma is scary. Often not because they don't want to be supportive, but because they are not sure what say or how to respond. When a survivor discloses — whether it be their first time telling anyone or their hundredth — recognize that the process can be extremely difficult and that you should be as supportive as possible. When a survivor comes to you, remember that they have chosen to trust you with a part of themselves. Here are some ways you can demonstrate support.

Suggested Responses

Consider these non-judgmental, supportive responses:

- **“I’m sorry this happened.”** This phrase helps to communicate empathy.
- **“It’s not your fault.”** Too often, survivors blame themselves, especially if they know the perpetrator personally. Remind survivors that they aren’t to blame. You may need to remind them more than once.
- **“I believe you.”** Believing a person is one of the best things you can do. Survivors can have a difficult time coming forward and sharing their stories, often feeling ashamed, concerned they won’t be believed, or worried they might be blamed.
- **“Thank you for sharing with me”** A simple acknowledgment of how challenging it can be to reach out for help can demonstrate understanding the impact of the situation.
- **“How you are feeling is normal”** Whether it is sad, mad, numb, or confused, assure them that there is no right way to respond to trauma. Their feelings are valid.
- **“You are not alone.”** Remind survivors that you are there for them and willing to listen. Remind them of other people in their life who care. Help them seek services (on or off campus) to receive support from a professional during this process.

Responses to Avoid

When responding to a student, avoid statements such as:

- **“Why/What/How questions.”** Avoid questioning what the survivor is telling you. Don’t ask “What were you doing out so late?” or “How'd you let them do this?” It is never the survivor’s fault that they were harmed no matter the circumstances. Remember your role is to support the survivor and not to gather all the facts and determine whether a crime took place.
- **“It wasn’t the perpetrator's fault.”** The perpetrator’s actions are inexcusable. Any and all excuses for the perpetrator are detrimental to the survivor’s long-term mental health and can compromise the trusting and supportive relationship you have with the survivor.
- **“You have to report/go to the hospital/etc.”** Do not tell the survivor what they must do. Suggest resources they may use or offer to explore resources available to them. Empower the survivor.
- **Question why the survivor has decided to tell you now, even if it has been months or years since the assault.** Individuals heal at their own pace. Be grateful that they opened up to you now, and validate the strength that it must have taken for them to survive this situation.
- **Expect the survivor to cope or react a certain way.** Everyone reacts to trauma differently.

Supporting a Survivor: The Basics

DO NOT

- **Question the validity of the victim's claims.** A victim's worst fear is not being believed. Having someone question whether or not a person was actually violated, assaulted, or raped is a huge insult that can shake a survivor to his or her core.
- **Make excuses for the perpetrator.** Don't suggest that the survivor approach the assailant to make sense of what happened or to "clear the air." Don't suggest a simple apology will remedy the problem.
- **Tell the survivor what they must do.** Suggest resources they may use or offer to explore resources available to them, such as filing a report with law enforcement, talking with an attorney, seeking out therapy or medical aid, and talking to a rape hotline.
- **Minimize the assault.** Remember that one kind of rape or assault — by a stranger, an acquaintance, a friend, a partner — isn't more or less "legitimate" than another.
- **Question why the survivor has decided to tell you now, even if it has been months or years since the assault.**
- **Shoulder the burden alone.** Be kind and honest with the victim about what you are able to do, and encourage him or her to seek professional help through a hotline or therapist.
- **Share the survivor's story without his or her permission.**

DO

- **Validate their feelings about the experience, acknowledging pain without catastrophizing.** If they start to minimize what has happened to them, let them know that you believe them and that there is no need to minimize what happened to them. Another way a survivor might minimize the abuse is by saying that since sexual violence is common, it's "not that big of a deal." Remind them that statistics don't take away from the hurt or pain they are experiencing.
- **At the same time, remember that while sexual abuse is always inexcusable, it isn't always traumatic.** Sometimes sexual abuse is earth-shattering for a victim; sometimes it's a disturbing but small bump in the road. Just as you shouldn't minimize the assault, don't catastrophize either. Stay attuned to the survivors' attitude and don't assume or dictate how she or he must feel.
- **Express admiration for their courage and recognize how difficult this must have been for them.** Tell them how genuinely impacted you are by their resiliency and recognize that this must be very difficult, but that they can find support.
- **Be strong and take care of yourself.** You'll be better able to respond to the survivors' needs if you also take care of yourself. Secondary trauma is real, and you should — while respecting the survivors' confidentiality — turn to your own support system and be realistic about how much you can provide.

Resources to Know

Confidential

The **Wellness Center** is the hub for confidential services at USF St. Petersburg. The three (3) services include:

Victim Advocacy

Serves any student who has been the victim of a crime.

Psychological Services

All currently enrolled USF students are eligible for counseling and psychological services. Staff members are licensed and experienced mental health professionals from the disciplines of clinical and counseling psychology, as well as social work.

Medical Services

Any registered USF St. Petersburg student is eligible to obtain health care services at the Wellness Center.

Access these services by calling
727-873-4422

Non Confidential

Student Outreach & Support (SOS)

727-873-4278

SOS is a student-first direct care coordination team that assists students to manage stress and reduce barriers that impact their academic success and overall health and wellness.

University Police Department (UPD)

727-873-4444

UPD is a professional state law enforcement entity with sworn officers who are here to serve the campus community as well as to protect it.

Title IX

727-873-4826

Title IX is a federal law that prohibits discrimination based on the sex (gender) of employees and students of educational institutions that receive federal financial assistance. Title IX's prohibition of sex discrimination includes prohibition of sexual harassment as well as sexual and relationship violence.

Community Resources

- *CASA (domestic violence services): 727-895-4912*
- *Suncoast (sexual violence services): 727-530-7273*
- *2-1-1 (resource clearinghouse): call 211 or text your Zip Code to 898211*
- *Florida Council Against Sexual Violence: 888-956-7273*
- *Florida Domestic Violence Hotline: 800-500-1119*
- *Community Law Program: 800-625-2257 or online at lawprogram.org/*

Faculty & Staff Reporting Options and Resources

For complaints about sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment, and violence

MEDICAL RESOURCES

Wellness Center
727-873-4422
stpetersburg.usf.edu/student-life/wellness

Bayfront Health
St. Petersburg
727-823-1234
bayfrontstpete.com

St. Pete Free Clinic
(non-emergency)
727-821-1200
stpetersburgfreeclinic.org

REPORTING OPTIONS**

Making a formal report to law enforcement and/or the University by contacting any of the following offices:

University Police Department
727-872-4444
stpetersburg.usf.edu/police/

Title IX Deputy Coordinator and Dean of Students - Jacob Diaz
(727) 873-4826
usf.edu/title-ix/

Student Conduct & Ethical Development
727-873-4278
stpetersburg.usf.edu/student-life/resources/student-conduct.aspx

Does the student want/need to seek medical attention?

YES

NO/
UNSURE

Does the student want to talk to someone?

YES

NO/
UNSURE

Does the student want to report it to the University?

YES

NO/
UNSURE

****NOTE:** A Victim Advocate can support students who wish to report their victimization. An advocate can provide information about these systems as well as accompany students during all portions of these processes. Students never have to go through this alone.

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

Confidential resources will not report or share information without your consent.

Other resources will maintain your privacy to the greatest extent possible, but **may generate a Title IX report and are not confidential.**

Both confidential and private resources must act to address any immediate threats to community health and safety.

CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES

ON CAMPUS
Wellness Center
727-873-4422

OFF CAMPUS
CASA
727-895-4912

Suncoast Center
727-530-7273

Forensic medical exams (SAVE exams), including testing for sexually transmitted diseases and follow-up medical treatments, evaluations and referrals are provided to victims of sexual assault at **no charge** to the victim.

Engagement Ideas

As a part of this University community, you have tremendous potential to shape student behavior and norms — not only for students during their time in college but also in their lives moving forward. You can be an ally to student activists trying to improve school climate, an advocate for better school policies, and a resource for students looking to better understand the issue.

It may feel strange or intimidating to discuss the details of a student's private life, especially in an academic setting. However, don't reject your student's attempt to reach out to you. Be supportive, suggest resources, and be clear with the student about any school policies that make it necessary for you to alert the administration, public safety, or health services about the assault.

Be a resource. Educate yourself on school policy and what your job requires in terms of mandatory reporting. Believe and listen (with empathy and without judgment) to students who come to you with experiences of sexual violence. Help direct them to appropriate school and community resources.

Label triggering material. If you are covering material about sexual violence — such as reading a book or watching a movie that contains scenes of sexual violence — consider giving students a warning about the potentially distressing content of the material, and giving students the opportunity to leave the room if necessary. Adding a brief note to a syllabus about such content and available resources can make a real difference in students' lives.

Use teachable moments in the classroom. If the class is covering a book with violent content, take the opportunity to talk to your class about the issue and provide them with further resources.

Support student-led efforts. Consider sponsoring and mentoring a student group against gender-based violence. Ask students how you can best support their efforts. And help spread the word about on and off-campus resources that are available to them.

Engagement Ideas

Statements for Syllabus

Your course syllabus is a resource that your students will refer to throughout the semester. What else can you communicate to students with this one document? A syllabus can be used to communicate your values and commitment to violence prevention, active bystander behavior, and support for survivors of violence! Add a footer or a header to your syllabus with a simple message and listing campus resources (including yourself) if someone needs a safe person to seek help. Here are some examples of statements of commitment and support:

- “As an instructor, students frequently come to me for assistance in matters that are not related to the course material. Please be aware that USF’s policies require instructors to report any instance of sexual harassment, sexual violence and/or other forms of prohibited discrimination. If you would rather share information about these experiences with an employee who does not have these reporting responsibilities and can keep the information confidential, please contact Victim Advocacy at (727) 873-4422.”
- “I am committed to supporting and encouraging students, staff, and faculty to take responsibility for safety on our campus.
- “If you experience any form of violence, I am here to support you. Please don’t hesitate to reach out or contact: Victim Advocacy (727) 873-4422”
- “If you or someone you know experience stalking, partner violence or sexual assault, please know, you are not alone. There are resources that can help: Victim Advocacy (727) 873-4422”

Extra Credit Options

- **Market it.** Design a mock social marketing campaign to mobilize the campus community around violence prevention. Write a plan, create a brand and distribution system.
- **Attend it.** Participate in a community or campus event focused on violence prevention or supporting survivors (Bystander Training, Take Back the Night, Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and Sexual Assault Awareness Month).
- **Discover it.** Interview a local or campus victim service provider, advocate or counselor about their work and their opinions on prevention of violence.
- **Organize it.** Start a project or organize an event or gathering to further support for survivors and other prevention efforts on campus. Mobilize your community!
- **Write about it.** Write an article or letter to the editor for the local or campus newspaper about the importance of violence prevention.