

Responding to sexual assault



Respectful Communities information sheet

November 2017 - For internal staff training use only

At Deakin, we have strong guiding principles on how we respond to disclosures of sexual assault. Our emphasis is to ensure that we have a victim/survivor-centred approach. The best way to provide support to someone who has disclosed a sexual assault is to believe them. People rarely make up stories about sexual assault.

We aim to ensure that we do not cause further trauma to victim/survivors and to respond in a supportive, non-blaming and compassionate way. As a member of the Deakin Security team, you will need to familiarise yourself with your standard operation procedures in responding to an emergency and have the ability to recognise sexual assault. Please ensure that you read this document in conjunction with Deakin's *Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Policy* and the *Sexual Assault Response Procedure*.

Students and staff who have experienced sexual assault are encouraged to seek information and support from, or report the matter to, Deakin's Safer Community service.

Safer Community
T: 03 9244 3734
E: safercommunity@deakin.edu.au

Support and advice from external agencies is also available:

- Sexual Assault Crisis Line (SACL): 1800 806 292 (24 hour service)
- National Hotline for Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault: 1800RESPECT (1800 737 732)

If someone makes a disclosure of sexual assault to you, it is important that your initial response is appropriate and always victim/survivor-centred. After experiencing sexual assault the victim/survivor needs to:

- be believed
- feel safe
- be assured that it wasn't their fault

It is important that as a first responder you:

- be supportive
- be encouraging, open and honest

- listen to their story
- let them express how they feel
- respect their privacy
- listen without judging the person
- do not to worry or ask questions if the story doesn't add up
- inform the victim/ survivor about support services and options for formal reporting
- allow them to take control and make decisions that are in their best interest at the time

If the sexual assault was recent:

- consider preserving forensic evidence
- remember, the victim/survivor may consider reporting the matter to the Police at any time

Do NOT:

- tell victim/survivors what to do or try to take over the situation
- ask them the "why" questions like why they were there or why they trusted the perpetrator
- get angry on their behalf
- assume you know how they feel

You are **REQUIRED** to refer the matter to the University's Safer Community for further assistance and advice. If a victim survivor is concerned about privacy, you can inform them that:

- they can make an anonymous report to Safer Community
- you can withhold their identity when discussing the matter with Safer Community should the victim survivor wish NOT to share their identity they will NOT be required, forced or obliged to be involved or participate in any formal process such as investigations or disciplinary hearings
- they may choose not to identify the alleged perpetrator when making a report

if the victim survivor is under 18, Deakin University is legally obliged to make a report to the police. You must familiarise yourself with *Deakin's Child Safety Policy* and *Child Safety and Child Abuse Response and Reporting Procedure*.