

A student comes to the office of the Dean of students complaining about behavior in the residence hall. Ethnic slurs have been written on his door, shaving cream has been spread out over his belongings in the bathroom, and his car has been damaged. The staff seems powerless in the situation as they cannot identify the culprits. The student is both frightened and angry. He feels he knows the persons who are responsible and gives the names of three other hall residents. Further conversations among the Dean, the Hall Director, and the Student Residence Assistants reveal that although they have no hard evidence, they firmly believe the three students identified by the complaining student are involved.

Should the Dean take action? If so, what should she do? If not so, then why?

ANSWER: The Dean must take action. She should make efforts to provide help, support, and advice to the complaining student to assist him in a difficult situation. The Dean should talk to the alleged offenders, and inform them that they are strongly suspected of wrongdoing. The Dean should not at this point level accusations at them or insist that they confess, but she should make clear to them the institutional stance against the behavior of which they are suspected. Efforts at education in the form of discussions in the residence hall about racism and ethnic slurs should be organized.

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