



Supporting a Friend/Loved One who has Caused Harm or has been Accused of Sexual Violence

SEXUAL VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROJECT

- If a friend, partner, or someone you know is accused of sexual assault, relationship violence, stalking, or harassment you likely have questions and may be struggling to understand what has happened.
- You may be experiencing a range of emotions such as helplessness, anger, confusion, or betrayal and are unsure how to respond to them or the situation.
- If they have told you that they have caused harm or have been accused of sexual violence, they are likely turning to you for help and support. Know that it is natural for you to feel conflicted regarding your response, but also know that simply providing information and emotional support in no way condones the behavior or alleged behavior but represents an act of compassion and care for your friend. Here are some things you can do to support your friend/loved one.

1. DIRECT YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE TO RESOURCES

There are individuals on campus who are available to talk with students who have caused harm or been accused of sexual violence. These professionals can help that person process what they may be going through and help them understand what may happen next. Helping your friend access these resources is a step you can take to provide support in what may be a confusing and emotional time for both of you.

Encourage your friend/loved one to speak with their family and/or a confidential resource like a [Counselor at Dick's House](#) or the [College Chaplain](#). If your friend/loved one has been charged by the College, encourage them to speak with someone from the [Title IX Office](#) to learn more about the charge and the [College's process](#) so they can feel better prepared.

2. SEEK COUNSELING

Encourage your friend/loved one to seek counseling to process the emotions that they may be experiencing. It may also be helpful for you to seek counseling to help you process any emotions and distress you may be experiencing as a result of this situation. A counselor at Dick's House or the College Chaplain can help students process the experience, guide you or them in coping, help them consider options, and decide what will be most beneficial to them in their situation.

The [Counseling Center](#) & the [College Chaplain](#) can offer support and information and/or connect you or them with additional campus and community resources—their goal is to help students make their own informed, empowered decisions. The Counseling Center and the College Chaplain are confidential.

THE COUNSELING CENTER

If you/they need help now—The Counseling Center offers 24-hour crisis counseling for enrolled students or for those who are concerned about an enrolled student.

•**During Regular Business Hours:** Call (603) 646-9442 and ask to speak with the Counselor on-Call or come to The Counseling Center on the second floor of Dick's House. Please inform the administrative staff that you have an urgent concern.

•**After Regular Business Hours:** The Counselor on-Call can be reached by calling Dick's House Inpatient Department (IPD) at (603) 646-9440 or by calling Safety and Security at (603) 646-3333.

Clinicians at the Counseling Center recognize the importance of privacy and safety as the basis of effective counseling. Counseling records are confidential and are kept separate from a student's medical records. No information is given out to anyone (family, friends, Deans, prospective employers) about students seeking help at the Counseling Center without written permission. Exceptions to confidentiality are rare and specifically mandated by law and professional ethics. For further information, please see [Confidentiality & Release of Information](#).

COLLEGE CHAPLAIN

The College Chaplain provides confidential counseling, crisis response, and is a non-mandatory reporter available to ALL campus members, secular or religious, undergraduate or graduate, faculty or staff. Pastoral support offered by Tucker staff is open, non-judgmental, affirming and respectful.

In addition, UCM ordained clergy are identified as confidential resources under New Hampshire statute and College policy. As such, they may not share your information without your express consent unless there is imminent danger to self or others or as otherwise required by law (e.g., mandatory reporting for sexual violence against minors).

-**To Contact:** Call 603-646-3780 or email:
College.Chaplain@dartmouth.edu

3. IF YOU CAN, BE AVAILABLE TO LISTEN

Just being there and listening may not feel like much to you, but it can feel incredibly supportive and helpful to your friend/loved one. They may not feel comfortable talking about the matter, but if you are, let them know that you will listen if they do decide to talk with you about it.

If possible, provide an atmosphere where your friend/loved one can express honest feelings. They may not feel that they have many people that they can talk with, so it is important to let them know whether or not, and how much you can support them.

Again, this does not mean that you need to affirm or condone any particular behavior(s), but that they are not alone, and you will provide a compassionate ear as they attempt to work through this difficult experience.

HELPFUL PHRASES WHEN TALKING WITH YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE:

- Thank you for sharing this with me.
- I can only imagine how difficult this must be.
- There are confidential people at Dartmouth that you can talk with.
- What do you need right now?
- What do you want to do?
- Tell me more about _____?
- What do they think about that?
- What would you like to see happen?
- What does that mean to you?
- How can I help you?

4. AVOID JUDGING

Accept your friend/loved one as a person, even if you don't agree with their behavior. Remember, being a friend/loved one does NOT mean approving all your friend/loved one's actions and/or choices. You can help them without making a judgment as to whether or not they harmed someone else. Determining if a crime or judicial violation took place is the responsibility of campus administrators and/or the legal system, not yours.

5. RESPECT THEIR PRIVACY

Don't share what your friend/loved one tells you with others, unless you are concerned for their safety. This could create additional difficulties for them and/or the reporting student. If you are concerned that your friend/loved one may hurt themselves or others, or that someone is planning to hurt them, please call Safety & Security 603-646-3333 or the Hanover Police at 911 immediately and/or the Counselor-on-Call.

6. AVOID TAKING ACTION

Violence or retaliation is not the answer to helping your friend/loved one. Remember, harassing and threatening behaviors towards them, the reporting student, or the reporting student's friends are not helpful. These behaviors could cause additional harm, undermine any court or judicial proceeding taking place, and could get you or your friend/loved one into an even worse situation.

If your friend/loved one expresses an interest in contacting the reporting student "to explain their side, to talk about what happened, or to try to work things out," strongly discourage this behavior. Even if your friend/loved one has good intentions, the reporting student already feels violated and further contact from your friend/loved one or 3rd parties could be perceived as intimidating, harassing, and threatening to the reporting student.

7. GET SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF

Supporting a friend/loved one through a distressing situation can be a difficult and emotionally draining experience for those in the support role as well. Recognize this and don't hesitate to seek help and support for yourself when you need it.

Again, the [Counselors](#) at Dick's House and the [College Chaplain](#) are confidential and available for you as well. You cannot effectively support your friend/loved one without being mindful of your own health and well-being.

8. GET EDUCATED ON THE ISSUE OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

There is a lot of [information available online](#) to help you better understand sexual violence and/or answer some of the questions you may have. If you are seeking additional information or would like to talk with someone in person you can reach out to a staff member on the [Sexual Violence Prevention Project](#) team, our [WISE Campus Advocate](#), [Counselors](#) at Dick's House, or a [SAPA](#).

WHAT NOT TO DO

While some of these actions may seem helpful, they are not and can often cause further harm and make the situation much worse for your friend/loved one, the reporting person, you, and any others involved.

1. OFFER YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE HELP AND SUPPORT IF IT IS NOT GENUINE ON YOUR PART.

They need someone they can turn to and if that's not you, that's ok, be honest and direct them to other supports.

2. GIVE ADVICE OR TELL THEM WHAT TO DO

These situations are sensitive and complex and often need professional guidance.

3. INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION

That is not your job and can interfere with the outcome.

4. BLAME THEM OR THE REPORTING STUDENT FOR WHAT HAPPENED

You don't know everything, and it is not your job to investigate or come to any particular finding.

5. CONTACT THE REPORTING STUDENT OR THEIR FRIENDS

This is a form of retaliation and can feel intimidating, harassing, or threatening to them.

6. ASSUME YOU KNOW HOW YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE WANTS TO BE TREATED

Ask them how you can support them, what they need, and how-to check-in with them.

7. RELY ON YOUR FRIEND/LOVED ONE TO DEAL WITH YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT THE SITUATION

They have enough on their plate to process and cannot console you as well.

8. BREAK THEIR TRUST BY TELLING OTHERS

Unless you are obligated by policy or law to report/share information. If you are a Responsible Employee who is required to disclose any sexual misconduct information, inform your friend or loved one ahead of time.

9. ENCOURAGE DANGEROUS OR RISKY COPING MECHANISM

· (i.e., retaliation, drinking, drug use, violence, self-harm, etc.)

SEEKING ACCOUNTABILITY

Adapted from Stanford University

Many of us want to hold someone who has caused harm or been accused accountable for their actions and prevent them from causing harm again, but we sometimes take actions without thinking about their impact and can in turn cause more harm. Here are some resources that may be helpful when establishing community accountability, transforming behaviors, and preventing harm:

- **How to hold others accountable:** Watch "[What Are Obstacles to Accountability?](#)", which is an 11-min video that explores why taking accountability can be difficult, how White supremacy culture socializes us to rely on punishment as a response to harm-doing, and how we can reimagine accountability as an opportunity for growth and transformation instead of something that scares and isolates people.

- It's important that our communities establish clear boundaries and are transparent about what will happen to someone who has caused harm.
 - Review the [Build a Culture of Consent Starter Kit](#) and work with your community to identify community boundaries for your groups, house, organization or team.
- Sign your community up for a SVPP workshop so you can brainstorm community norms and learn how to intervene in daily acts of harm and high-risk situations while considering identity and power.
 - SVPP@dartmouth.edu

SOME QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER ARE:

- What are the goals with accountability (e.g. acknowledging harm, behavior change, shame)? What does accountability mean to the person/people who were harmed? To your friend/loved one? To you?
 - Explore more here: [6 Signs Your Call-Out Isn't Actually About Accountability](#), by Maisha Z. Johnson
- What forms of accountability are you considering engaging in? Are they rooted in oppression such as punishment, shame, or even more violence?
 - Explore more here: [10 Strategies for Cultivating Community Accountability](#), by Ann Russo
- What support do you need to hold your friend accountable and take care of yourself? Do you need talking points? Support from friends? Support from Dartmouth resources? Something else?
- What systems led to the harm taking place? Are there norms, policies or behaviors that need to change? Is your group, house, organization or team culture contributing to a positive or harmful culture or norms?