

GVSC FACULTY RESOURCE GUIDE

**Recommendations for
supporting students impacted
by gender-based violence and
harassment**

Created by UNC-Chapel Hill's
Gender Violence Services Coordinators
(GVSCs)

Updated Fall 2023

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ABOUT THE GENDER VIOLENCE SERVICES COORDINATORS (GVSCS)

The Gender Violence Services Coordinators (GVSCs) provide confidential support and advocacy for all students, faculty, and staff at UNC-Chapel Hill impacted by gender-based violence and harassment. All support and services are free.

Website: vpas.unc.edu/confidential-support

Email: gvsc@unc.edu **Phone:** 919-962-1343

Instagram: [@uncgvsc](https://www.instagram.com/uncgvsc)

INTRODUCTION

Sexual and interpersonal violence, stalking, and sexual or gender-based harassment impact individuals within our campus community every year. Whether a student experiences violence before or during their time at Carolina, coping with that experience can intersect with many areas of a student's life. Students may manage impact that intersects with academics, the classroom environment, and their capacity as a learner.

According to the 2019 Association of American Universities' (AAU) Campus Climate Survey, 20.7% of UNC-Chapel Hill survey respondents reported experiencing sexual touching or penetration involving force, an inability to consent, coercion, or no voluntary agreement since entering college. Aggregate data for all 33 campuses that participated in the AAU Campus Climate Survey indicated gender-based violence and harassment had a significant academic impact for students. Survey results indicated 62% of women, 75.7% of transgender, genderqueer or nonbinary, or questioning individuals, and 48.2% of men reported at least one academic or professional consequence such as difficulty concentrating on studies, assignments or exams, decreased class attendance, and difficulty going to work.

RESPONDING TO DISCLOSURES

When a student chooses to share their personal experience with a faculty member, we encourage faculty to consider the trust and vulnerability the student expressed by disclosing.

Some students may be comfortable disclosing, and for others, choosing to share with a professor may be the only way they feel they can ask for help or seek assistance for the course. Students may disclose in-person, via email, or through assignments and coursework. We encourage faculty to thank students for sharing their experience, affirm their support for the student, and ask how they would like to proceed in discussing their needs and potential options for support that may exist in your course. We also encourage faculty to refrain from asking detailed questions about the student's experience or the incident and focus any questions on identifying concerns and needed support related to the student's academics and well-being.

When professors respond with care and compassion, we often see that students are more likely to engage with their faculty to best determine how they can move forward in the course.

- **“Thank you so much for trusting me with that information. Is there any support you feel that you need related to our class or outside of the classroom?”**
- **“Thank you for sharing this with me. How about we work together to come up with a plan for your success this semester?”**

Professors may be interested in following up with a student at a later point to check in. In the initial conversation with a student, we encourage faculty to share that they would like to follow up with the student and ask if the student is comfortable with that. From there, the professor and student can come up with a plan for follow up that may include a timeframe and method of follow up. Some students may feel more comfortable initiating a conversation while others may find an email check in helpful. This allows the student to set boundaries and develop a sense of control around sharing their experience. Follow the student's lead – some may share details, others a vague update, and some may not respond at all. If a professor has concerns about following up with a student or a student's lack of engagement, please reach out to us and we are happy to brainstorm ideas and approaches.

- **“I really appreciate your openness in sharing this with me so that we could talk through how I can best support you. Is it okay if I follow up with you around midterms, or would you rather reach out to me if you want to talk further about this?”**

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EMPLOYEE RESPONSIBILITIES TO REPORT

“ *A student disclosed to me. Do I need to make a report?* ”

It's important for faculty to understand whether they are designated as a Responsible Employee and/or Campus Security Authority. If faculty hold these designations, they are required to share information disclosed to them regarding gender-based violence or harassment with the University.

We encourage faculty who hold Responsible Employee and/or Clery Security Authority designations to proactively inform students about the designation(s), responsibility to share information, and what will happen once information is shared. Ways to inform students include incorporating a syllabus statement for the course, reviewing designations during the first class, and reminding students at the beginning of any individual conversation. While all faculty members may not hold these designations, we encourage faculty to work with departments to determine whether any reporting protocols may exist specific to a department or school.

When informing students about the requirement to share information with the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office (Responsible Employee) and/or the Clery Compliance Coordinator (Campus Security Authority), please share that students should expect an outreach email from the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office offering support and resources. Students are not obligated to respond to that email.

For questions about Response Employee or Campus Security Authority designations, please contact the following offices:

**Responsible Employee - Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office; eoc@unc.edu
Campus Security Authority - Clery Compliance Coordinator; clery@unc.edu**

REFERRING TO RESOURCES

A NOTE ABOUT CONFIDENTIAL & PRIVATE RESOURCES

Private resources are offices on campus that may share information related to a report with other University employees who “need to know” some information in order to assist in the active review, investigation, or resolution of the report. While private resources are not confidential, these individuals use discretion and work to respect the privacy of individuals involved.

Includes offices like: Equal Opportunity and Compliance, UNC Police, Dean of Students

Confidential resources are offices on campus that may only disclose information with an individual’s express permission, except in certain circumstances permitted and required by law.

Includes offices like: Gender Violence Services Coordinators, Counseling and Psychological Services, Campus Health, University Ombuds Office, Orange County Rape Crisis Center, Compass Center, and UNC Hospitals Emergency Department

Faculty do not need to be experts in all the options and support available. Instead, faculty can serve as an informed bridge by sharing resources and helping the student to connect with any resources of interest.

Upon receiving a Responsible Employee report, the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office will send outreach to the student to share resources and offer to connect. However, professors can still share information about resources like Safe at UNC, the Gender Violence Services Coordinators, and the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office.

With a student's explicit permission, faculty can also offer to connect the student directly with a resource to help make the referral. Some students find it helpful for their professor to send an introductory email to the Gender Violence Services Coordinators or the Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office’s Report and Response Coordinators and copy them on it. This email does not need to include any details about what they have shared and can focus on their interest in connecting.

It is important to refrain from providing advice or direction about the resources a student “should” connect with. Students need to feel empowered to make decisions that are best for them and faculty can play a critical role in supporting their decision-making. Some students may opt to connect with resources immediately and others may take some time to consider their options and needs.

SUPPORT FOR YOURSELF

It can be difficult to learn that gender-based violence or harassment has impacted someone you know. It is not uncommon to feel some level of personal impact when you learn of someone's experience or are offering support. We encourage faculty to seek support for themselves and reach out to resources available on campus and in the community.

All [GVSC services](#) are available for faculty and staff. Please reach out to share any impact you may feel and discuss questions or concerns that arise as you are supporting a student.

Faculty do not need to disclose identifying or specific information about a student in order for us to provide a supportive space for processing.

To learn more about supporting yourself and others, check out [Supporting Victim/Survivors](#) on the Safe at UNC website.



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PROFESSOR NOTIFICATIONS

Professor notifications can be sent by the GVSCs and/or the EOC Office. A professor notification email indicates that a student has connected with a resource and serves as an informal request for any support that may be possible. No specific details regarding the student's experience are included.

Professor notifications are separate from any formal accommodations a student may receive through [Accessibility Resources & Service](#). In most cases, a professor notification does not include any specific requests for support. Instead, the email serves as a way to initiate conversation between the student and professor.

We inform students that a professor notification does not request or guarantee specific kinds of support for a class. Students often find it helpful when a professor confirms receipt of the email and offers any support or next steps, such as an invitation for further conversation or any specific options that might be available.

UNIVERSITY APPROVED ABSENCES

Circumstances and impact related to gender-based violence and harassment may qualify for [University Approved Absences \(UAA\)](#). UAAs requires instructors to make reasonable accommodations to allow students a fair and equitable experience in the course. UAAs are approved by designated resources on campus and issued through the [University Approved Absence Office](#). If a student would like to request UAAs in a confidential manner, they may reach out to the Gender Violence Services Coordinators directly.

ACCESSIBILITY RESOURCES & SERVICE

Students impacted by gender-based violence and harassment may choose to register with [Accessibility Resources & Service \(ARS\)](#). ARS seeks to meet the individual academic, residential, dining, and co/extra-curricular needs of applicants and current students with disabilities. ARS works to coordinate and implement appropriate reasonable accommodations which may include academic adjustments to courses.

FOSTERING A SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Ideas like the ones below may offer students signs of support and recognition that professors understand the impact these experiences may have on a student's time at Carolina.

Syllabus Statement: A syllabus statement recognizes the impact of gender-based violence and harassment, provides information about resources, and can help normalize seeking support. Example language can be found under [Tips for Faculty](#) on the Safe at UNC website.

Complete HAVEN Training: After completing [HAVEN](#), display your placard or sticker prominently in your office or include a note in your email signature, website, or syllabus.

Content Awareness: Include notations on syllabi for topics, assignments, readings, lectures, etc., that may relate to gender-based violence and harassment. Encourage students to reach out if they have concerns about participating or completing coursework on these topics and consider offering alternative assignments or attendance options for those classes.

Advance Notice and/or Reminders: Proactively share information with students about upcoming relevant topics or coursework to help students prepare for class.

Build in Breaks: Offer quick breaks during discussions or lectures related to gender-based violence or harassment. Offering students a couple minutes to get water, stretch, or briefly change up their environment can help students who may be concerned about singling themselves out or excusing themselves during class.



IDEAS FOR SUPPORT IN THE COURSE

We recognize not all ideas may be possible for every course and we encourage faculty to balance support and flexibility while upholding fairness and learning objectives for the course.

Flexible Attendance: Some professors may permit additional absences, allow a student to come late or leave early, or participate remotely, asynchronously, etc.

Alternative Assignments: This could look like offering for a student to present an assignment to the professor and teaching assistant versus the class, submit reading summaries instead of class participation, or complete a written assignment with a different but relevant topic than the original assignment.

Alternative Testing Locations or Times: Some students may benefit from taking tests or exams in a different location or at a different time. We've seen faculty use their offices, allow a teaching assistant to monitor tests at alternative times or locations, or have the student schedule a time with the [Undergraduate Testing Center](#).

Navigating a Shared Classroom: A student may share a class with someone who harmed them. If this situation arises, it can be helpful to be mindful about keeping students separate in assigning group work, shared projects, peer grading, and seating configurations.

Grading: Some faculty may adjust weights for graded assignments. For example, if a student is struggling with attendance, the professor may reduce the weight of the grade for attendance and increase the weight for the midterm and final exam.

Plan for the Semester: Offer to meet with the student to come up with a plan for the semester. This can be a great way to review expectations and course schedule, identify areas of concern, and consider support options that may be available.

Student Disclosures: If a student discloses in an assignment, it can be helpful to follow up and acknowledge their disclosure, thank them for sharing, and offer to connect them with resources. We encourage you to include information about your Responsible Employee designation, if applicable.

THE VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



Remote and virtual learning environments present unique challenges. Video platforms invite users into an individual's personal space, which can feel intimate, violating, and impact privacy. The space students use to attend class and study not be a safe environment for them or may be the same space they were harmed in.

Surroundings can provide cues or information about location which may aid someone in monitoring or tracking. When students share a class with someone who has harmed them, the "face-to-face" nature of virtual learning increases the ways a student must interact, see, or hear the other person. Platforms can also serve as an additional channel for unwanted communication and harassment.

Many recommendations for supporting students mentioned in this guide remain applicable in the virtual environment. However, here are some additional supports that may be helpful for remote and virtual learning environments.

Flexible Video Policy: We recognize the challenge of teaching to a screen of blank squares. However, students may feel more comfortable participating and engaging in class if they have flexibility to turn their video on or off. Some professors may always allow for video flexibility and some structure their course to include times where video is required and others when it is not.

Chat Feature: If a student shares concerns regarding unwanted communication, it may be helpful to turn off the chat feature for the duration of class. In other cases, the chat feature may allow for participating in a safer and more comfortable manner than audio and video afford.

Exam Proctoring: If an exam requires proctoring, it may be helpful to provide options for how it can be proctored. For some students, in-person proctoring may be preferable over sharing the virtual space with classmates or being monitored by an online, remote proctor who is not visible to them.

Virtual Backgrounds: Allowing virtual or blurred backgrounds can help students participate via video without having to show their location or surrounding environment.

TOPICS THAT MAY BE DIFFICULT

A student's experience of gender-based violence is unique to them, so it is challenging to know which topics may or may not be difficult for particular students in your class.

Topics or content that explicitly reference sexual violence, interpersonal (relationship) violence, stalking, or sexual or gender-based harassment may be challenging. For others, it may be topics that are relevant and specific to the circumstances of their own experience. We encourage faculty to create a classroom environment where students feel supported in sharing their needs without requiring them to disclose specific details of their experience.

UNDERSTANDING COMMON RESPONSES TO GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

There is no right way for a student to respond or cope after experiencing gender-based violence or harassment. Students may feel a range of emotions, reactions, or responses. Responses and needs may shift and change over time, too.

For more information about common responses, check out [Supporting Victims/Survivors](#) on the Safe at UNC website.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about **resources, support, and reporting options** available for students, faculty, and staff impacted by gender-based violence and harassment, check out the [Safe At UNC](#) website.

For more information about **University policies** related to gender-based violence and harassment, please connect with the [Equal Opportunity and Compliance Office](#).

For more information about the **confidential support and services** available for students, faculty, and staff impacted by gender-based violence and harassment, please connect with the [Gender Violence Services Coordinators](#). We would love to hear from you and questions, concerns, or ideas you might have to create more supportive learning environments at Carolina. Please reach out to us at gvsc@unc.edu or 919-962-1343.

For additional training related to **supporting individuals** impacted by gender-based violence and harassment, sign-up for a [HAVEN](#) training. HAVEN (Helping Advocates for Ending Violence Now) is a 3-hour training that emphasizes the importance of listening, responding compassionately, and connecting individuals to resources on campus and in the community.