



University Counselling

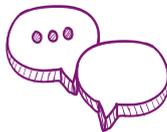
HOW TO SUPPORT SOMEONE WHO DISCLOSES A SEXUAL ASSAULT



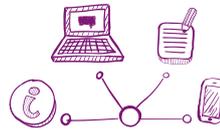
Find an appropriate space



Establish Safety



Listen and show empathy



Provide support options



Practice self-care

FIND AN APPROPRIATE SPACE

Take the person to an appropriate space to start or continue a conversation. This means finding a space where the person feels comfortable so that you can talk privately and are not rushed or interrupted.

ESTABLISH SAFETY

Identify whether there is an immediate threat to the person's safety. If you determine there is an immediate danger from the alleged perpetrator, or the person needs immediate medical attention, contact the Police or Ambulance 000 or Campus Security:
Callaghan campus - (02) 4921 5888
Newcastle City campus - (02) 4921 7962
Central Coast campus at Ourimbah - (02) 4348 4222
Port Macquarie campus - 0412 595 054
Sydney campus - (02) 8262 6488

LISTEN AND SHOW EMPATHY

When someone makes a disclosure about sexual assault, the first response is often critical in their recovery and decisions about what to do next. Your role is to assist them to access the services they require and support the decisions that they make.

When listening, there are three key messages to give:

I believe you.

This is not your fault. The offender is always responsible for sexual assault.

Let's get you connected with specialised support.

It is important to affirm that you believe them and will help them access services that they might need.

PROVIDE INFORMATION ABOUT OPTIONS FOR SUPPORT AND MAKING A REPORT

As a student or a staff member receiving a disclosure, you can offer to support the victim/survivor to consider their options for accessing professional support and reporting the sexual assault. You may wish to show them The University of Newcastle (UON) factsheets outlining reporting options, or support them to contact Campus Care (02) 4921 8600 for further information.

Support options

The person you are supporting may like to consider seeing their GP or a bulk billing doctor at the University Health Service (02) 4921 6000. Medical attention may be required for injuries, pregnancy options, testing for STIs or other health concerns such as sleeping difficulties.

It is important to affirm that you believe them and will help them access services they might need.

There are a number of free and confidential counselling services available for victim/survivors of sexual assault, including UON Counselling (02) 4921 6622 and the local Sexual Assault Service. A detailed list of support options can be found on the UON website (search “talking to someone”) or by contacting NSW Rape Crisis Centre on 1800 424 017. The University of Newcastle also provides an after-hours Crisis Support Line on 1300 653 007. The assault does not need to be formally reported in order for the person to access counselling.

If the victim/survivor is a student, they may like to apply for adverse circumstances to reduce the immediate demands of their studies. Student Support (02) 4921 6622 or their GP will be able to provide supporting documentation.

Reporting Options

UON students have five main reporting options:

1. Informal Disclosure to UON Campus Care for advice and information. The details are kept confidential with no further action by UON but kept on file and can be used for a formal report at a later time.
2. Formal Report to UON Campus Care for referral to the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) for formal assessment of the matter under the Student Conduct Rule. This does not initiate a police investigation.
3. Informal Report to NSW Police for information without the incident being formally investigated, or make an anonymous online report to NSW police via the Sexual Assault Reporting Option (SARO).
4. Formal Report to NSW Police so that the matter can be subject to a criminal investigation.
5. Not make any reports.

If the assault occurred recently (in the last seven days) and the victim/survivor is considering proceeding with a criminal investigation, they may wish to complete forensic medical examination to collect evidence. This evidence is collected using a Sexual Assault Investigation Kit (SAIK) by specialists at a hospital or Sexual Assault Clinic. It is important to understand that if the victim/survivor wishes to make a report to UON and to NSW Police, then this will involve two separate reporting processes.

Victim/survivors may experience a number of barriers to making a report, including feelings of shame and guilt, fear of not being believed, concerns about privacy, not wanting to have to retell the story, wanting to protect the perpetrator, fear of the perpetrator, or limited knowledge of what the process might involve.

It is vital to remember that the decision about what to do is always with the person who has experienced the assault. Allowing the victim/survivor to make their own decisions wherever possible can support them to regain a sense of control over their own life.

If you or the victim/survivor have any questions about support or reporting options, Campus Care (02) 4921 8600 campuscare@newcastle.edu.au is your best point of contact. More information is available on the UON website and the ‘Reporting a Sexual Assault’ factsheet.



PRACTICE SELF-CARE

Supporting a person who experiences or discloses sexually based assault or harassment can have a significant impact. You may experience vicarious trauma, guilt, anger, or changes in your beliefs about the world. After you have assisted the person who has experienced the sexual assault, it is important that you have your own strategies and support to make sure that you are ok.

If you need advice or to debrief, you can call the NSW 24 hour Rape Crisis phone line 1800 424 017 or the UON after-hours support line 1300 653 007 (5pm-9am weekdays, 24hrs weekends and public holidays). You may also be able to access UON Counselling (02) 4921 6622 or mental health services via referral from your GP.

In addition to the above options, UON staff are able to access the Employee Assistance Program and specialist online training for Responding to Disclosures of Sexual Violence via the UON Discover training portal.