

Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO)

Inclusive Trauma-Informed Response and Support

Any faculty, staff or student who experiences or receives a disclosure of Sexual Violence is encouraged to contact:

Director, SVPRO

svpro@mcmaster.ca

905.525.9140 Ext. 20909

Director, SVPRO will:

- consider safety measures that may be necessary;
- refer the individual for medical services as needed;
- actively and empathically listen to their needs and concerns without judgement;
- share reporting options available;
- clarify commitments to confidentiality and its limits;
- explain the difference between disclosure and reporting;
- make a referral to police if the individual chooses that option
- conduct a complaint intake if the individual chooses that option;
- assist with navigating any relevant University systems and procedures;
- facilitate workplace, academic, and/or residence accommodations;
- consider differing cultural needs and offer/refer to culturally relevant supports;
- provide information about and referral to campus and community services;
- liaise with relevant partners to ensure coordinated response and support; and,
- facilitate ongoing assessment, planning and case management.

Prevention Education and Response Training

Coordinator, Sexual Violence Prevention Education Program

svpro@mcmaster.ca

The Coordinator offers:

- Prevention education on topics such as addressing sexual violence myths and misconceptions, promoting healthy masculinity, and creating a culture of consent; and
- Response training on the how to appropriately receive a Disclosure and provide timely and trauma-informed support using the Recognize, Respond, Refer Protocol.

Definitions of Sexual Violence and Consent

Sexual Violence means any sexual act or act targeting a person's sexuality, gender identity or gender expression, whether the act is physical or psychological in nature, that is committed, threatened or attempted against a person without the person's consent, and includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, and sexual exploitation.

Consent, in the context of sexual activity, is the voluntary agreement of an individual to engage in the sexual activity in question.

The law also says that there is **no consent** where:

- the individual expresses, by words or conduct, a lack of agreement to engage in the activity;
- the individual is incapable of consenting to the activity;
- the person induces the individual to engage in the activity by abusing a position of trust, power or authority; and,
- the agreement is expressed, by words or conduct, of a person other than the individual

Sexual Violence Response Protocol

Recognize, Respond, Refer

All Community Members are responsible for contributing to an environment that is free of Sexual Violence, and for participating in relevant education and training programs. Community members are not expected to be experts, but rather to “recognize, respond, and refer” to appropriately support an individual who makes a Disclosure.

Recognize

- Be aware that experiencing Sexual Violence can be traumatic
- Be aware that a positive Disclosure experience is key
- Be aware of cultural differences and power dynamic
- Be aware of health and physical safety needs

Respond

- Be open and approachable
- Be compassionate and respectful
- Listen actively and empathically
- Provide validation and non-judgemental support

Refer

- Share information about resources and refer the individual to the SVPRO
- If Limits of Confidentiality apply, inform appropriate University official
- Follow-up and check in with the individual, as appropriate
- Consult with the SVPRO and get support for yourself as needed

Every individual will experience the effects of sexual violence differently. Some of the effects are:

Emotional

- Shock and disbelief
- A feeling of “why me?”
- Confusion
- Denial

Psychological

- Loss of self-esteem
- Distress/Anxiety (post-traumatic stress)
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feelings of helplessness/hopelessness
- Depression
- Thoughts of suicide

Physiological

- Flashbacks/nightmares
- Sleep disturbances/insomnia
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating

Do's and Don'ts: Tips When Giving Support



Do:

- ✓ Listen with care and empathy
- ✓ Be non-judgemental
- ✓ Take the student's lead
- ✓ Be aware of your non-verbals
- ✓ Expect many or no emotions
- ✓ Respect personal space
- ✓ Help explore options
- ✓ Facilitate referrals



Don't:

- ✗ Make assumptions
- ✗ Ask questions out of curiosity
- ✗ Probe or investigate
- ✗ Tell student what is “normal”
- ✗ Discount if alcohol involved
- ✗ “Take sides”
- ✗ Blame the survivor
- ✗ Try to “fix” or “rescue”

Disclosing and Reporting

The Difference Between Disclosing and Reporting

Disclosing an experience of Sexual Violence is a separate decision from making a report. Each decision will result in different levels of University involvement and action.

Disclosure

A **Disclosure** is made when an individual informs a Community Member about an experience of Sexual Violence because they wish to access support, accommodations, and/or information about their options. A Disclosure will not automatically lead to the initiation of a formal report.

Report

A **Report** occurs when an individual determines that they wish to make an official Complaint under the University Sexual Violence Policy and/or file a Criminal Report with the Hamilton Police Service.

A Complaint under the University Sexual Violence Policy requires the submission of a formal written allegation or “statement of complaint”. The allegation may be investigated to determine whether a violation of the Sexual Violence Policy occurred and if/what sanctions may be appropriate.

A Criminal Report may be filed through McMaster’s Security Services, who will liaise with and facilitate reporting to the Hamilton Police Service, or it may be filed directly with the Police.

Reporting options are not mutually exclusive. Individuals may choose to proceed with one or both options.

Confidentiality and its Limits

Confidentiality refers to the obligation of an individual or organization to safeguard entrusted information. The practice of confidentiality includes obligations to protect information from unauthorized access, use, disclosure, modification, loss, or theft.

The University will share identifying information only in circumstances where it is necessary in order to address safety concerns or to satisfy a legal reporting requirement.

In such circumstances, the minimum amount of information needed to allow such concerns to be addressed, or to meet such requirements, will be disclosed.

Such circumstances include those where:

1. an individual is at risk of harm to self;
2. an individual is at risk of harming others;
3. there are reasonable grounds to be concerned about risk of future violence or the safety of the University and/or broader community;
4. disclosure is required by law, for instance: suspected abuse of someone under the age of 16, reports of intimate partner/ domestic violence, or to comply with legislation such as the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, or with human rights legislation; and/or

5. to comply with the reporting requirements of regulatory bodies and/or professional licensing bodies.

Where there are reasonable grounds to be concerned about risk of future violence or the safety of the broader community or the public, or where the University is otherwise obligated to do so, the University may report the incident to Hamilton Police Services.

In these situations:

1. the relevant Decision-Maker will be responsible for making the decision to disclose information to Hamilton Police Services;
2. the name of the Respondent, if known, will be shared; and
3. the name of the Complainant will not be shared without their consent, unless doing so would address a reporting obligation or mitigate a safety risk.

Where there are circumstances that constitute Limits of Confidentiality, Community Members are expected to immediately inform their direct supervisor and/or the Director of the SVPRO.

If a Community Member is unsure about the commitment and limits to confidentiality, they should consult the **Director, SVPRO** at **905.525.9140 ext. 20909** or **svpro@mcmaster.ca**.

Central Consultative and Complaint Intake Function of the Sexual Violence Prevention and Response Office (SVPRO)

