

FAQs for Responsible Employees

How to respond when a student discloses Prohibited Conduct

What are “responsible employees,” and am I one of them?

“Responsible employee” is a term coined by the Office for Civil Rights within their [federally mandated guidelines](#) regarding colleges’ response to sexual harassment and/or interpersonal violence. Responsible employees are individuals who must report incidents of sexual harassment to the Title IX Coordinator or other appropriate school designee.¹ Schools are required to address instances of sexual harassment that responsible employees know or should have known about.

In response to guidance from the Office for Civil Rights, St. Olaf designates as “responsible employees” all college employees who are not confidential resources.² This includes student workers, who are considered to be responsible employees when working in the capacity of their job. Responsible employees are obligated to report any incidents of prohibited conduct that they become aware of to the [Title IX Coordinator](#) or any other member of the [Title IX team](#).

What does “prohibited conduct” include?

Prohibited conduct includes sexual assault, sexual harassment, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, sexual exploitation, and retaliation. For a full list of those terms and their definitions, please refer to St. Olaf’s [Prohibited Conduct policy](#).

What do I say to a student who discloses to me?

Let the student know that you are obligated to report the student’s experience to the College, even if the student requests confidentiality. It is best to attempt to make this obligation clear as early in the conversation as possible so that the student can decide how much information to share with you. It is also recommended to add your responsibility as a “responsible employee” to your syllabi or supervisory information so that students can understand your obligations early on in the semester (especially if your class includes coursework that could potentially lead to disclosures from students). Feel free to copy-paste any of the [templates](#) we’ve created into your syllabi and/or supervisory information.

Explain to the student that reporting the disclosure to the College helps to ensure that students are connected with those trained to address and respond to incidents of prohibited conduct. You can also explain that reporting to the college does not necessarily mean that the college will pursue a formal investigation and adjudication process.

How do I make a report to the College after a disclosure, and what do I include in that report?

Reports regarding sexual violence should go to the [Title IX Coordinator](#) or any other member of the [Title IX Team](#). Reports can be made in person, via email, over the phone, or by utilizing St. Olaf’s [online reporting form](#). Reports should include all the information the student shared (the student’s name; date, time, and/or location of the incident; names of other students involved; etc.). *Please note that responsible employees should not attempt to investigate or ask additional questions about the incident beyond what the student voluntarily shares.*

¹ From the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights document “Questions and Answers on Title IX and Sexual Violence” <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/qa-201404-title-ix.pdf>

² See page 14 of St. Olaf’s Policy Prohibiting Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct <https://wp.stolaf.edu/title-ix/policy/>.

What does the College do after it receives a report from a responsible employee?

After a responsible employee has reported, the [Title IX Coordinator](#) sends an email to the student who disclosed. The email includes information about resources and options available to the student. The email clearly states that the student is not obligated to meet with the Title IX Coordinator if the student is not ready to do so.

What information should I give to the student during or after a disclosure?

Explain to the student that there are [confidential resources](#) available on campus who do not have the same obligation to report to the College, and help get the student connected with those resources if desired.

You can also let the student know that after the report to the College is made, the student will receive an email from the [Title IX Coordinator](#) that explains options and resources available to the student. The student is not required to meet with the Title IX Coordinator and is able to decline making an official report to the college if desired.

What are some tips for speaking with an individual who discloses prohibited conduct to me?

Listen with care and without judgment. Ask what the individual needs or what would be helpful to them. Offer the various resources available to the student both on and off campus. Explain what supports are available to students who report to the College (such as academic accommodations, a no-contact directive, etc.). Remind the student that reporting to the College will not initiate a formal investigation.³ Some helpful phrases are below:

- “I am sorry this happened to you.”
- “How can I help?”
- “Do you feel safe?”
- “Have you had a chance to get medical attention?”
- “Thank you for telling me.”
- “What happened is not your fault.”

Who is classified as a confidential resource at St. Olaf?

The [College Pastors](#), employees at [Health Services](#), counselors and employees at [Boe House](#), and advocates through the student-led [Sexual Assault Resource Network](#) (SARN) are all confidential resources on campus.

For questions about responsible employees, reporting, or St. Olaf’s Prohibited Conduct Policy, please contact:

Kari Hohn, Title IX Coordinator
khohn@stolaf.edu | 507.786.3465
Tomson Hall 148

³ St. Olaf College will not override a Reporting Party’s decision not to initiate a Resolution Process except in cases where the alleged incident may signal a significant safety risk to the Reporting Party and/or other members of the St. Olaf community. Examples include allegations involving use of a weapon, multiple offenders, repeat offenses, the use of date rape drugs, or behavior involving multiple types of Prohibited Conduct; see the [College’s Policy](#) for additional examples. Such cases are rare. In the vast majority of cases, the college will honor a Reporting Party’s decision as to whether and when to initiate a Resolution Process.