

Student Organizations and Sexual Misconduct: A Guide

Purpose and Limitations

This guide is intended to help student organizations create safer communities and foster a commitment to ending sexual misconduct. This guide also outlines the ways in which various UNC offices can offer support to student organizations as they navigate these issues

Build Safer Communities

Student organizations play an important role in creating a sense of community for Tar Heels. Here are some things your organization can do to foster an informed community that is committed to ending sexual violence.

Know Where Your Organization Stands

Consider what your organization stands for and clearly outline your values. Once you have established your organizational values, it's important that you center those values in your leadership team, recruitment practices, events, and communications. If you are unsure of how to establish your organization's values, Student Life and Leadership has resources that can help inform your process and ensure your governing documents are updated.

Consider Community Identities

Understand that every community is diverse and individual members have different lived experiences. Identity is complex; we all have many different identities that intersect to inform how we view and experience the world. Avoid making generalizations about your community and create an environment that acknowledges the diverse experiences of your members.

Set Membership Expectations

Set clear expectations for your members for how they participate in the community. Emphasize practicing consent and respect for individuals' boundaries. Make sure that these expectations align with your organizational values and are reflected in your communication with members. Call into question any discussion or jokes that contain racist, sexist, homophobic, or transphobic rhetoric. Remove shame and judgement from conversations around abstaining from or engaging in sexual activity. Respect others' choices.

Lead By Example

As leaders of your organization, make sure your actions align with the values of your organization and the expectations you set for your members. Practice and model consent in your daily interactions and respect the boundaries of your members. Speak up and intervene when members or other leadership act inappropriately. Make sure you respect your own boundaries and seek support when you need it.

Get Educated

Creating and maintaining an informed community is a crucial part of sexual misconduct prevention. Make sure both your leadership and members are aware of your organizational values and expectations. Participate in trainings like One ACT and HAVEN to develop bystander intervention and survivor support skills.

Community Accountability

Navigating the topic of sexual violence is difficult, especially in a social setting such as a student organization. Avoid spreading rumors or sharing personal information about members in formal or informal settings. As a student organization, you can provide resources and support for groups or individuals to prevent further harm instead of engaging in or fueling further harm. See below for information on supporting survivors in your organization and working with members accused of sexual misconduct.

Support Survivors

It is important to note that each survivor has unique needs and desires around safety and support. Ask them how your organization can support them.

Here are some ways to support someone who shares an experience of violence with you:

- Validate their experience as they share it
- Check in around feelings of safety and comfort
- Offer to connect them with resources (GVSCs, CAPS, EOC, OCRCC)
- Respect their decisions
- Maintain privacy

Remember: It is not the role of the organization to investigate the claims of the survivor or ask for more detail than what the survivor is willing to share.

Understand Title IX

It can be difficult for organizations to work with members accused of sexual misconduct. Organizations are limited in what actions they can take and accused members are entitled to due process. Please refer to the Title IX for Student Orgs Q&A document for more information on responding to allegations of misconduct against a member.

Utilize University Resources

Creating a preventative space and working with survivors and accused members is difficult; UNC has many resources to help you navigate through these issues. Please visit safe.unc.edu for more information on support services, campus resources, and educational opportunities.

This document has been adapted from William & Mary's "Preparing Your Organization Before a Problem Arises: Sexual Misconduct Prevention"