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sexual assault, harassment & dating violence

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Sexual Harassment

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The University takes sexual harassment very seriously, and there are many resources on campus to address this problem. This page focuses on providing information and resources for students. For a more detailed discussion of these policies, you can refer to Brown's **Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Office**.

What is sexual harassment?

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 protects students from unlawful sexual harassment in all school programs and activities. The Office of Civil Rights is the federal agency that ensures that academic institutions comply with Title IX.

- Federal law defines sexual harassment as:
 - Unwelcome sexual advances
 - Requests for sexual favors
 - Other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when
 - submission to such conduct is made explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or academic success or
 - submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment or academic decisions affecting such individuals or
 - the conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work or academic performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or sexually offensive working environment.

Examples of sexual harassment include:

- Uninvited touching or hugging
- Requesting sexual favors for rewards related to school or work
- Suggestive jokes of a sexual nature
- Sexual pictures or displays
- Continuing unwelcome flirtation or propositions
- Obscene gestures or sounds
- Written notes of a sexual nature

Sexual harassment typically falls into 2 categories: quid pro quo and hostile environment. Quid pro quo harassment occurs when a professor or staff member causes a student to believe that he or she must submit to unwelcome sexual conduct or risk a negative academic outcome. For example, if a professor tells a student that s/he will not pass a course unless requests for sexual favors are granted, this is known as "quid pro quo" sexual

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harassment. This type of sexual harassment usually involves a situation where one person has more power than the other person.

Hostile environment harassment occurs when unwelcome sexually harassing conduct is so severe, persistent or pervasive that it affects a student's ability to participate in University activities or creates an intimidating, threatening or abusive educational environment. If a supervisor (or coworker or fellow student) makes sexual jokes, obscene gestures and/or posts sexual pictures that make people uncomfortable, this is called "hostile environment" sexual harassment.

It is important to understand that any type of sexual harassment can be blatant or it can be very subtle. It can take the form of one serious incident or more subtle acts that continue over time. Sexual harassment can be intentional or unintentional.

Who can be a victim of sexual harassment?

The victim may be a woman or a man. The victim does not have to be of the opposite sex of the harasser. The victim does not have to be the person directly harassed but could be anyone affected by the offensive conduct.

Who can be a sexual harasser?

The harasser may be a woman or a man. Sexual harassment may occur between any two members of the Brown community, for example, between faculty and students, faculty and faculty, students and staff, and student and student. While sexual harassment often occurs when there is a power differential between the 2 people, it can also happen between peers or colleagues where there is no power difference.

Can one incident constitute sexual harassment?

It depends. In "quid pro quo" cases, a single sexual advance may constitute harassment if it is linked to the granting or denial of employment or educational advancement. In contrast, a single incident of offensive sexual conduct or remarks generally does not create a "hostile environment." A hostile environment claim usually requires a showing of a pattern of offensive conduct. However, a single incident that is severe, could create a hostile environment.

It is important to remember that every situation is unique and needs to be evaluated based on several factors, including the nature of the behavior, the frequency and context of the behavior, and the relationship between the 2 people involved. Because of this, we recommend talking to any one of the resources listed below so that you can better understand the situation, your options and your rights.

What can I do to prevent sexual harassment?

It is important to be aware that sexual remarks or physical conduct of a sexual nature may be offensive or can make some people uncomfortable even if you wouldn't feel the same way yourself. Follow these guidelines to help avoid making someone else uncomfortable:

- Do not repeat behavior if you have been told that it is not wanted. If you are in doubt, stop the behavior.
- Ask if something you do or say is being perceived as offensive or unwelcome. If the answer is yes, stop the behavior.
- Do not interpret someone's silence as consent. Look for other nonverbal signals.
- Do not retaliate if someone accuses you of sexual harassment. Retaliation is against the law and is considered an additional or separate offense.

What do I do if I think I'm being sexually harassed?

Whether sexual harassment comes from a person in authority or a peer, it is not acceptable. Brown regards any behavior which is sexually harassing as a violation of the standards of conduct required for everyone associated with the University, whether faculty, staff or students.

If you are being sexually harassed, there are a number of things you can do:

- Tell the person that his or her behavior is making you uncomfortable, if you feel that you can do this. There are other ways of addressing the situation if this approach is not right for you.
- Save any written material, including pictures, notes and email, that is part of the harassment. You may be tempted to get rid of it immediately, especially if it is offensive. However, your feelings may change over time about whether or not you want to file a complaint, and that physical evidence will be very helpful in holding someone accountable.
- Know your rights and Brown's policies. You can contact any of the resources below and ask about services, confidentiality and the process of filing a complaint. You can call a staff member anonymously to discuss the situation and then decide what to do next.
- By discussing the situation with a staff member, you will learn about the options available to you. These options may include:
 - Informal resolution
 - Intervention by a third party (such as a Dean of the College)
 - Formal complaint process for faculty, students, or staff

How do I help a friend?

- It's important to take what your friend says seriously. Experiencing sexual harassment can be confusing and difficult to sort out. Providing a sympathetic ear will help your friend feel understood.
- Learn as much as you can about the available resources. It may be difficult for your friend to take the first step to talk to someone. You can call any of the resources and discuss the situation without identifying the people involved or filing a formal complaint. Gathering this information for your friend can help them make the best decision for their situation.
- Don't confront the harasser. Although it is normal to want to do this, it may only make things worse for your friend.
- Encourage your friend to save any physical evidence, including notes, pictures and emails. If your friend decides to file a complaint at some point, this evidence will be very important.
- If you are a residence hall staff member, be sure to follow your reporting protocols.
- It's important to recognize that hearing about your friend's situation could affect you in many different ways. Taking care of yourself will enable you to provide your friend with better support.

Where do I go for help?

Sexual Assault and Harassment Crisis Support 401.863-3476 (after hours, 863-1330)

Available through Psychological Services on-call system. Confidential crisis support and information is available for any Brown student dealing with sexual assault, sexual harassment, or violence in a relationship. The on-call counselor is also available to accompany a victim to the hospital.

The Advocates Program

Available Monday through Friday, 9am to 5pm. A Brown staff member is trained to provide information and to help Brown undergraduate and graduate students (male and female) explore their options to address an incident of sexual assault or sexual harassment. Talking with an Advocate does not

require a student to file a disciplinary complaint, to press criminal charges or to pursue any specific course of action.

The Advocate coordinator is:

- Gail Cohee, 401.863-1781
Director, Sarah Doyle Women's Center

Sexual Harassment Information Liaisons

If you would like assistance or wish to report sexually harassing behavior by faculty or staff, contact the Sexual Harassment Reporting Liaisons:

Gail Cohee, 401.863-1781

Dean Carla Hansen, 863-3800

Dean Kathleen McSharry, 863-2536

Student-to-Student Harassment

To report sexual harassment between students, contact Dean Allen Ward at the Office of Student Life, 863-3145.

Brown Department of Public Safety 401.863-3322

You may also direct any complaints to the Department of Public Safety.

Off-Campus Resources

RI Commission for Human Rights 401.222-2661

Investigates charges of sexual harassment and other forms of discrimination.

Office of Civil Rights, Department of Education - Boston Office

(617)223-9662

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission - Boston Office

(617)565-3200

Links you can use

[Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action](#)

This web page provides extensive information on the definition of sexual harassment, available resources at Brown and the options for informal resolutions and disciplinary options. Explains confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality when sexual harassment is reported.

[Sexual Harassment Internet Resources](#)

A list of several different links provided by the Feminist Majority Foundation.

[US Department of Education](#)

This website lists several publications on sexual harassment and the educational setting.

[US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#)

This website contains fact sheets and recent court decisions on sexual harassment.