

# Supporting Students

Gender-Based Harassment & Violence  
Information & Resources Guide for  
Frostburg State University Faculty



## Office of Gender Equity

126 Hitchins Administration Building

301.687.4733 | [titleix@frostburg.edu](mailto:titleix@frostburg.edu)

[www.frostburg.edu/titleix](http://www.frostburg.edu/titleix)

# Office of Gender Equity

---

Dear Frostburg State University Faculty,

Gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual and interpersonal violence can happen anywhere and to anyone. Frostburg State University and its students and employees are not immune.

It is our collective goal as educators to provide a campus community that is a safe place for our students to learn and grow. To further underscore our values of diversity, mutual respect, integrity, and personal responsibility, the Office of Gender Equity serves the University community in mitigating and managing reports of gender-based harassment and violence.

At Frostburg State University, our students often consider faculty trusted mentors. Because of this, you may be one of the first people a student reaches out to for guidance and support when they are struggling with a personal problem.

This guide was created to help you become more informed and effective responders for students who have experienced harassment and violence. Please take a few minutes to familiarize yourself with the contents of this guide and keep it in a place where you can refer to it when needed.

Thank you for the care and support you continue to show our students.

Best,

April Paul Baer, Ed.D.  
Interim Title IX  
Coordinator



# Table of Contents

---

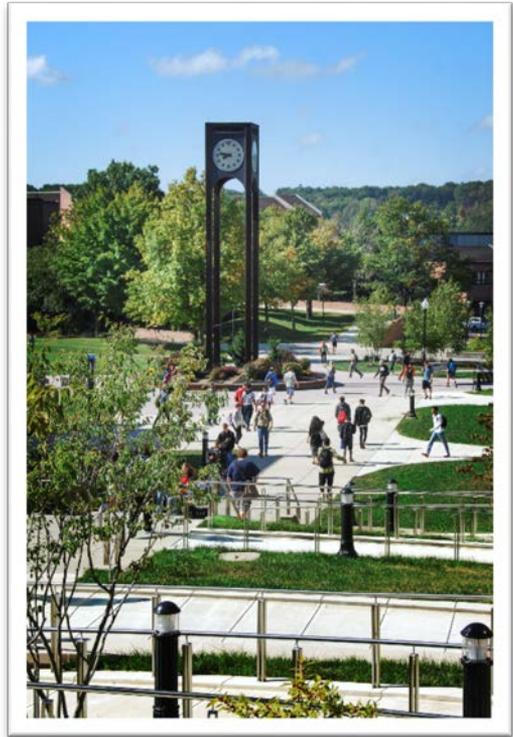
Gender-Based Harassment & Violence .....	4
Creating a Supportive Environment .....	6
Recognize Barriers .....	6
Understand Trauma .....	7
Embody Empathy .....	7
Disclose Obligation .....	8
Act Swiftly .....	9
Provide Support.....	9
Reporting Obligations .....	11
Reasons You’re Required to Report Incidents to the University .....	12
Submitting Your Report to the University .....	12
What Happens After a Report is Made?.....	13
Reports to Law Enforcement.....	13
Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect.....	13
Conversation Tips .....	14
Conversation Checklist .....	15
Campus & Community Resources.....	16
On-Campus Confidential Resources .....	16
Off-Campus Confidential Resources .....	16

# Gender-Based Harassment & Violence

---

Frostburg State University values and prioritizes providing a safe and inclusive learning, living, and working environment for all our students, employees, and guests to enjoy, without exception.

In addition to our adherence to federal and state laws, Frostburg State University has its own internal policies regarding conduct, including the Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Policy. This Policy communicates our expectations for behavior for all those affiliated with our institution.



Frostburg State is committed to seeing that all members of our community who are affected by gender-based harassment and violence are provided for redress and support. Individuals who experience such conduct are encouraged to explore all available options for resolution, including reporting the conduct to the University.

It is the responsibility of all Frostburg State Bobcats to promote a campus culture that is inclusive and welcoming. All incidents of gender-based harassment and violence are to be forwarded to the Office of Gender Equity to ensure our students have access to the resources and support they need.

The following are some of the forms of conduct prohibited under the University's Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Policy:

- **Gender-Based Harassment** includes unwelcome verbal, physical, or electronic conduct of a nonsexual nature based on sex, sex-stereotyping, sexual orientation, or gender identity that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance.
- **Sexual Violence** are physical sexual acts perpetrated without consent; such acts include rape, nonconsensual sexual intercourse, nonconsensual sexual contact, sexual battery, and sexual coercion.
- **Sexual Harassment** is any unwelcome sexual advances, unwelcome requests for sexual favors, or other unwelcome verbal, physical, or electronic conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's academic or work performance.
- **Relationship Violence** encompasses domestic and dating violence. Both terms refer to physical and/or sexual abuse committed by a person with whom an individual is or was in a romantic or intimate relationship, cohabitates, and/or shares a child.
- **Stalking** includes a course of physical or verbal conduct directed at another individual that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others, or suffer substantial emotional distress.
- **Retaliation** includes acts or words against an individual as a result of their participation in the reporting, investigation, or resolution of an allegation of gender-based harassment and violence.

For more information on the Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Policy, including more details on the forms of prohibited conduct, please visit [www.frostburg.edu/titleix](http://www.frostburg.edu/titleix).

# Creating a Supportive Environment

---

One in five college women and three in fifty college men will experience attempted or completed sexual assault while enrolled in college.

---

Ali, 2011; Koss, 1988

As an educator, you form important and influential connections with students. FSU students often see their faculty as trusted mentors and guides along their educational and professional journeys. Because of this, students often look to their faculty for support and advice in times of distress. Should a student choose to disclose something personal to you, know this student considers you a trusted advisor.

Sexual and interpersonal violence can happen to anyone. It can be difficult to hear that one of your students has been assaulted or is in an abusive relationship. The most important thing you can do is to help the student feel safe and supported.

## Recognize Barriers

Incidents of harassment and violence are perpetrated based upon power imbalance and exploitation. Often, those targeted feel marginalized or silenced as a result of their experience. Fears of not being believed or of getting into trouble can hold a student back from reporting the incident and seeking support. Frostburg State University has a plethora of professionals available to support students without judgement.

Also, those who report sexual violence will not face disciplinary action from the University for their consumption of alcohol or other drugs at or near the time of the incident. More information on the [University Amnesty Policy](#) can be found at [www.frostburg.edu/amnesty](http://www.frostburg.edu/amnesty). Recognizing the barriers to reporting can help you to minimize their impact while also helping to create supportive campus environment.

## Understand Trauma

Individuals in the immediate aftermath of trauma or long-time trauma survivors can experience a multitude of emotions, or may appear to have a flat affect. Trauma can impact the way a student learns and makes meaning of their experience. Know that each individual processes trauma in a manner unique to their personality and experience.

Responses could include shock, fear, distress, humiliation, anger, confusion, numbness, shame, and guilt. A student who experienced trauma may have difficulty concentrating and studying, difficulty sleeping or have nightmares, and may miss classes and withdraw from certain relationships. It is important not to assume any one person's response to trauma is correct or incorrect.

## Embody Empathy

Listen actively and without judgement – [it is the most important thing you can do.](#) Victims of sexual and interpersonal violence are often met with disbelief. Provide the student with a safe-space to share their experience. Remember, you are not a detective but a trusted advisor. Avoid questions that begin with “why” as they may place the student in a defensive position.

Be thoughtful in your verbal communication (e.g., tone of voice) and nonverbal behaviors (e.g., facial expression, body posture, and eye contact) in your interaction with your student at the time of disclosure and thereafter. Allow the student to set the tone for their future interactions with you by discussing healthy boundaries. It is important for students to feel supported without feeling overly identified by their trauma.

Also, be aware of your limitations. You are not expected to take on the role of a counselor, nor should you. You cannot provide confidential support, so maintain an appropriate boundary to protect the student's right to privacy. You need only to listen, care, and offer resource and referral options. Should you have questions or concerns about your role and capacity in supporting your student, call the Title IX Coordinator for additional assistance.

## Disclose Obligation

As Responsible Employees, the Department of Education dictates that faculty have a duty and responsibility to report incidents and disclosures of gender-based harassment, sexual misconduct, relationship violence, stalking, and retaliation to the Title IX Coordinator. As Mandated Reporters, the State of Maryland dictates that faculty have a duty to report incidents and disclosures of child abuse and neglect to University Police and to Child Protective Services.

Please note that faculty do not have to report disclosures of gender-based harassment or violence when communicated by a student during class discussion, as a part of a course assignment, or as a part of University-approved research.

Disclosures made before or after class, during meetings, including academic or student organization advising, or in general discussion outside of class ARE required to be reported. Please note that this specific carve-out for in-class disclosures DOES NOT include disclosures of child abuse and neglect, which must still be reported. When in doubt, or should you have questions regarding this specific exception to reporting gender-based harassment and violence, please contact the Title IX Coordinator.

Should a student seek your support in sharing their experience, explain your obligation to inform the University of the disclosure. It is helpful if you know the names of the people at the University responsible for handling the response to such disclosures and can speak highly of them to the student.

It is important that students are aware of a faculty member's reporting obligation prior to sharing their experience. Because disclosures may be shared in different contexts during your interactions with students, instructors are required to include language in their course syllabi that explains their reporting obligations.

You can find a copy of the statement to include in your syllabi in addition to more information regarding reporting obligations on the Office of Gender Equity's webpage at [www.frostburg.edu/titleix](http://www.frostburg.edu/titleix).

## Act Swiftly

In the immediate aftermath of an incident, it is important for our students to seek a safe place. Assess the student's safety by asking if they feel safe. If the student feels unsafe or is seriously injured, please call 911.

Students are also encouraged to take precautions to preserve any evidence that may help a criminal prosecution or University investigation. The student does not need to make any decisions about their desire to choose a way in which they wish to handle their report, but maintaining text messages, clothing, or any other physical evidence is important.

Forensic nurse examiners can perform a sexual assault forensic exam within 90 hours of an assault. The University can coordinate transportation for a student seeking medical support. For more information on what to do in the immediate aftermath of a sexual assault and forensic exams, please visit [www.frostburg.edu/titleix](http://www.frostburg.edu/titleix).

## Provide Support

Remember the following important points when providing support to a student who has experienced sexual or interpersonal violence:

- **You're an educator, not an investigator.** It is **NOT** your responsibility to determine the accuracy or credibility of what was disclosed nor to investigate the student's claims. Again, do not ask "why?" based questions or feel the need to address the misconduct directly. Ensure all information is shared in your report to the Office of Gender Equity.
- **Provide options, not counsel.** The Office of Gender Equity works to connect students with confidential resources on campus and within our community. It is important that you do not take on the responsibility of a counselor or medical professional, even if the student seeks your advice. Please refer the student to the resources in this booklet and offer to escort the student to Counseling and Psychological Services or Brady Health Center if the need arises.

- **Be responsive to formal requests to accommodations.** It is not uncommon for a student to struggle academically following an experience with sexual or interpersonal violence. The student may experience depression, anxiety, intrusive memories, changes in sleeping patterns, and increased alcohol and drug consumption in attempt to cope with these feelings. Any one of these responses has the potential to impact a student's ability to attend classes and concentrate on their academics. As an instructor, you may be asked to provide academic accommodations to a student who has experienced sexual or interpersonal violence. Should a student require academic accommodations, you will be contacted by Disability Support Services or designee. Please be assured that assessments are performed to ensure the academic support requested is appropriate.

Types of academic support requested may include:

- Alternative arrangements to make up course work
- Requesting additional time to complete assignments
- Requests to move a student from one section of a course into another

Due to the highly sensitive nature of the reports received by the Office of Gender Equity, all you may ever learn is that a student is in need of academic accommodations. Should you have concerns regarding the accommodations requested, know that the Office of Gender Equity is happy to explore all appropriate and reasonable options available.

- **Participate in ongoing trainings and professional development.** Gender-based harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual and interpersonal violence are difficult topics and working with students who experience trauma can be overwhelming. The University provides regular and ongoing training to help faculty and staff become more informed on these challenging topics. In addition, the University's Office of Gender Equity can provide departmental and/or office level trainings upon request. Please contact [titleix@frostburg.edu](mailto:titleix@frostburg.edu) to request a training.

# Reporting Obligations

---

“No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefit of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal funds.”

---

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (“Title IX”) prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex under any educational program or activity receiving federal financial assistance. Accordingly, educational institutions that receive federal funds must respond promptly and effectively to incidents of sexual harassment, including incidents of sexual violence that create a hostile environment.

The Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR), which puts forth guidance for educational institutions in meeting their Title IX obligations, states that any “**Responsible Employee**” that knows or should have known about possible sexual harassment (including sexual violence) must report it to the institution’s Title IX Coordinator so that the institution can eliminate the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and address its effects.

**Responsible Employees** include any employee who has the authority to address sexual harassment, has the duty to report such conduct to the institution, or whom a student could reasonably believe has this authority or duty. At FSU, all employees who are not otherwise designed as “confidential” are considered Responsible Employees. This includes: faculty members, adjunct instructors, academic advisors, supervisors, graduate student teaching assistants, and resident assistants.

Only the employees who work in Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) and Brady Health Center are considered confidential. Confidential Employees do not have an obligation to report information known to them, and students may speak to them confidentially, if desired. Confidential Employees will not share personally identifying information with University officials without the individual’s consent.

## Reasons You're Required to Report Incidents to the University

1. It's required by law and University policy
2. To ensure survivors have access to available resources, including academic, living, and employment accommodations and mental health and medical care.
3. To ensure consistency and continuity of care for all persons affected by gender-based harassment and violence.
4. To help identify and address trends or systemic problems.
5. To keep our campus community safe.

## Submitting Your Report to the University

Within 24-hours of learning about an incident of Prohibited Conduct (as defined in FSU's Gender-Based Harassment and Violence Policy), you are to contact the Office of Gender Equity.

Faculty are encouraged to submit their report online using the [Online Reporting Form](#) which can be found at [www.frostburg.edu/report](http://www.frostburg.edu/report).

our students, our campus,  
our responsibility

combat gender-based harassment & violence

Incidents of gender-based harassment & violence have a damaging affect upon the educational experiences of all Frostburg State University Bobcats.

As educators, we have the duty to report such incidences to ensure the welfare of our students & our campus community.

to report incidences of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, retaliation, and more, please visit

[www.frostburg.edu/report](http://www.frostburg.edu/report)

office of gender equity | 126 hitchins administration building | 301.687.4733 | [www.frostburg.edu/thek](http://www.frostburg.edu/thek)

## What Happens After a Report is Made?

Once the Office of Gender Equity receives the report, the Title IX Coordinator or designee will contact the student. The Title IX Coordinator will assess the situation to determine the safety of the student and others in the campus community. The Title IX Coordinator also explains to the student their administrative and legal options, making sure that the student is provided the opportunity to state their preference for moving forward. At the same time, the University's Office of Gender Equity ensures that the student has access to the resources and support they need both short- and long-term.

## Reports to Law Enforcement

Students who experience sexual or interpersonal violence are strongly encouraged to report the incident to law enforcement. If a student asks about reporting the incident to the police, it is important that they know doing so does not preclude them from also reporting the incident to the University. Reports made to FSU and to law enforcement may be pursued simultaneously; and the outcome of one investigation does not determine the outcome of the other. Finally, if a student wants to report an incident to law enforcement, University Police is willing to assist them in making the report to the appropriate law enforcement agency if the incident falls outside of the jurisdiction of University Police.

## Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect

Maryland law requires certain individuals—called mandated reporters—to immediately report any instances of suspected child abuse or neglect to law enforcement or an appropriate child protective service agency.

Under the law, all faculty and staff at FSU qualify as “mandated reporters” and must immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to University Police. A report is required in cases involving children under the age of 18, and in instances where an individual discloses that the abuse/neglect occurred when they were under the age of 18, regardless of the individual's current age, the location where the abuse/neglect occurred, or that the abuse/neglect had previously been reported.

# Conversation Tips

---

1. Allow the student time to tell their story, not pressuring them to talk. Listen without judgment and reassure them that you understand what they are telling you and what that happened to them was not their fault.

Consider saying something like:

- “I am here to help to you. You can tell me as much or as little as you need to right now.”
- “That must have been a very [disturbing, scary, terrifying, uncomfortable, frightening experience.”

2. Ask the student what they think would help them and provide them with information on resources. Remember, give options not advice.

Consider saying something like:

- “I care about your safety and wellbeing and there are several offices and resources on campus that care too and can make sure you are provided the support you need.”
- “I am sorry that this happened/is happening to you. I am glad that you told me because the University offers a wide range of resources and support to help you.”

3. Remind the student of your reporting obligation and provide information on next steps.

Consider saying something like:

- “Thank you for trusting me with this information. Please know that I will keep this information private and only share it with the University’s Title IX Coordinator. My colleague April Baer is the University’s Title IX Coordinator and she is going to reach out to you to make sure that you are okay, explain your options moving forward, and make sure that you have access to the services and support you need.”

## Conversation Checklist

The following checklist can help guide your discussion with a student who has experienced gender-based harassment or violence:

- ✓ Thank the student for their willingness to share their experience with you.
- ✓ Explain your role as a Responsible Employee in reporting the incident to the Title IX Coordinator.
  - » It is important that the student know that although you cannot promise confidentiality, you will be respectful of their privacy and will only share the information disclosed with those who need to know.
- ✓ Inquire as to the student's immediate safety and wellbeing.
  - » Contact University Police at 301.687.4222 if the student feels there is an immediate risk to their life or safety.
- ✓ Ask if you can escort the student to the Office of Gender Equity or to CAPS. Walking with the student to meet new supportive professionals can help to provide comfort in a time of need.
  - » If the student accepts the escort, please call ahead to ensure that someone from the office will be ready to greet you upon your arrival:
  - » If the student does not feel comfortable walking to another office, you can request that a professional from the aforementioned offices meet you and the student in your office.
- ✓ Share that upon reporting the information to the Office of Gender Equity, the Title IX Coordinator will connect with the student to explain their administrative and legal options and make sure they have the services and support they need.
  - » Encourage the student to check their University email account and cell phone for this contact.

Afterwards, be accessible to your student should they have follow up questions or concerns, but feel encouraged to seek additional assistance for yourself.

# Campus & Community Resources

---

Frostburg State University benefits from a wide range of resources on campus and in the local community to support students in times of distress. The University's Office of Gender Equity is committed to ensuring that students who experience gender-based harassment and violence are provided with the appropriate resources and support. You are encouraged to familiarize yourself with some of these resources in order to answer any questions the student may have and to help reassure them that there are others they can trust to help them through this difficult time.

## On-Campus Confidential Resources

### Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS)

Sand Spring Hall ● 301.687.4234 ● [caps@frostburg.edu](mailto:caps@frostburg.edu)

Hours: Monday - Friday 8:00 am to 4:30

CAPS is staffed by trained counselors who can provide confidential support and assistance to current students. CAPS offers individual and group counseling for those who experience sexual misconduct, relationship violence, and stalking as well as to students who may need support in assisting a friend who is a survivor. There is no cost for counseling services.

### Brady Health Center

301.687.4310 ● [bradyhealth@frostburg.edu](mailto:bradyhealth@frostburg.edu)

Hours: Monday - Thursday 8:30 am to 5:00 pm ● Friday 9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Brady Health Center is staffed by confidential licensed healthcare providers. The health center offers complete physical exams, screening and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), emergency contraception, and pregnancy tests.

## Off-Campus Confidential Resources

### Family Crisis Resource Center (FCRC) – Allegany County

301.759.9244 (24-hour helpline)

FCRC offers a 24-hour helpline and emergency shelter for survivors of sexual and interpersonal violence. FCRC also has trained counselors and advocates to offer survivors advocacy and accompaniment, individual and group counseling, and crisis intervention services. In addition to their office and emergency shelter in Cumberland, FCRC has a satellite office in Frostburg, located at 62 Frost Village Road.

## Citizens Assisting and Sheltering the Abused (CASA) – Washington

County 301.739.4990 (24-hour helpline) • [www.mcasa.org/](http://www.mcasa.org/)

CASA, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization that provides professional support services to people who have experienced relationship and sexual violence. Programs and services are available for individuals and families and include legal services, support groups, employment and training programs, and more.

## Western Maryland Regional Medical Center – Allegany County

12500 Willowbrook Road • Cumberland, Maryland 21502 • 240.964.7000

Western Maryland Regional Medical Center is the designated hospital in Allegany County with a certified forensic nurse examiner who can perform a sexual assault forensic evidence (SAFE) exam. There is no charge for a forensic medical examination and survivors have the option of reporting the assault to the police or can file a “Jane Doe” report where they can remain anonymous and have their evidence stored with no personal identifying information. The University can also arrange transportation to and from the hospital for any student wanting a SAFE exam performed.

## Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)

[www.mcasa.org](http://www.mcasa.org)

MCASA has valuable information and resources on its website for sexual assault survivors, including the locations of rape crisis and recovery centers located across Maryland so survivors can find help when they are home and away from the campus.

## National Sex Assault Hotline

1.800.656.4673 • <https://ohl.rainn.org/online>

The National Sex Assault Hotline offers 24-hour confidential support and referral information for survivors. Individuals can call the 1-800 number or use online instant messaging to connect to a confidential support specialist.

## National Domestic Violence Hotline

1.800.799.7223 • <http://www.thehotline.org/>

The National Domestic Violence Hotline offers 24-hour confidential and free support for survivors. Individuals who have experienced abuse, have abused, or are trying to help a friend in an abusive relationship can speak with an advocate via telephone or instant message.

Additional resource information can be found online at [www.frostburg.edu/titleix](http://www.frostburg.edu/titleix).