



## Sexual Violence Intervention and Response Policy

Approved by the Board of Directors – August 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

AMENDED by the Board - December 7, 2016

### **Purpose**

All members of the Nipissing University community have a right to work and study in an environment that is free from any form of sexual violence. The purpose of this policy is to outline the proper procedures and protocol for all NUSU employees, directors, and volunteers in the event that an individual has experienced sexual violence.

### **Introduction**

The Nipissing University Student Union stands with survivors of sexual violence, regardless of circumstance. We pledge to believe and listen to all survivors. We stand with Nipissing University and their commitment to address sexual violence - both on campus and in the community - through awareness, education, outreach, and the provision of materials to support survivors.

In partnership with Nipissing's #NUPerspective campaign, NUSU will continue its efforts to promote and facilitate campus-wide conversations regarding sexual violence and prevention. NUSU - in conjunction with the #NUPerspective team - will be organizing a variety of events and initiatives to end sexual violence through prevention and education.

NUSU will allow the following principles to guide us in the creation of a safe campus.

1. Survivors will be believed and respected as the final decision-makers regarding their own best interests.
2. We respect the choices of survivors surrounding what and how much they disclose about their experience.
3. We will strive to provide academic accommodations to support survivors.
4. We will respect the formal procedure in place for responding to incidents of sexual violence.
5. The institution will engage in public education and prevention initiatives.
6. The statement applies to everyone who lives, works, or studies on campus.

Sexual violence means any sexual act or act targeting an individual's sexuality, whether physically or psychologically, that has harmful implications to the overall well-being of



an individual. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, sexual assault, sexual harassment, stalking, indecent exposure, voyeurism, degrading sexual imagery, distribution of sexual images or video of a community member without their consent, and cyber harassment or cyberstalking of a sexual nature.

## **Procedures**

### Disclosure

An individual who has experienced sexual violence may decide to disclose their situation to another individual. Disclosing sexual violence is different from making a report of sexual violence. In a disclosure, the survivor is telling someone about what has happened in order to receive supports, services, safety planning and/or academic accommodations. People most often disclose in order to access Supports and Services (both informal and formal).

In the event that someone discloses their experience to a NUSU employee or volunteer, here is the procedure to follow which shall guide their conversation:

1. Believe them – it is important for the NUSU representative to believe them and remind them that the experience is not their fault;
2. Respect Confidentiality – The NUSU representative must respect and fully ensure that the information shall remain in confidence unless otherwise specified by the survivor;
3. Ask them what support looks like for them. Remember that not every individual wants to report to the police or authorities. It is important to establish how they want to proceed with regards to support and services;
4. Value their boundaries – It is important that the NUSU representative does not pry or press for additional details from their experience;
5. Empathize – individuals deal with trauma differently. It is important to recognize that you may not have an answer or solution to the problem. Remind them that you are there to support them.

The following list provides several examples of what NOT to do when receiving a disclosure:

1. Do not react with disbelief, disgust, or anger at anything they tell you;
2. Do not do/say nothing;
3. Do not give advice. As a NUSU representative, it is not in our capacity to provide advice with respect to sexual violence;
4. Do not insist or persuade them into any course of action (i.e. report to University counselors);



5. Do not contact the police against their will;
6. Do not conduct a personal investigation into their experience, or pursue further details on your own.

Ultimately, how they want to proceed after disclosing their experience is up to the individual, and that shall be respected and practiced by NUSU representatives.

There are, however, certain circumstances in which confidentiality cannot be assured such as:

1. An individual is at serious risk of harming themselves
2. An individual is at serious risk of harming others
3. Reporting is required by law or professional practice (e.g., sexual violence towards a minor, sexual violence by a regulated health care professional)
4. Evidence of sexual violence is in the public realm (i.e. videos or images shared publicly on social media)

In such circumstances, the information will only be shared with necessary internal and/or external services to prevent harm, in accordance to Nipissing University's Sexual Violence Policy.

### Reporting

Reporting is the formal procedure that occurs when an individual discloses their experiences with sexual violence to an authority. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to, reporting the experience to Nipissing University Residence Life, Nipissing University, Campus Security, North Bay Police Services, Medical Assistance and Forensic Medical Exam, Civil Claim (civil suit against a perpetrator for damages suffered), and/or Community Counselors.

In the event an individual would like to proceed with a formal report, here is the procedure as follows:

1. Provide the individual with the necessary contact information. This includes all relevant contact information for the services stated above. The NUSU representative can refer the individual to our website to find such information.
2. The NUSU representative must continue to be supportive, empathetic, and provide a reasonable amount of assistance while respecting professional boundaries.
3. The NUSU representative shall also respect confidentiality unless otherwise advised by the individual in question.



### **Intra-Office Procedure**

In the event that an experience of sexual violence occurs within the NUSU office, all reports should be made to the President and Vice-President Communications, who will follow through on the report as required by law. Should the President or the Vice-President Communications be the one who experiences sexual violence, they shall report to the other. If both parties are involved in an incident, Nipissing University's Human Resources Department shall be consulted by the Executive Committee for recommendations on how best to proceed.

### **Policy Review**

This policy will be reviewed as necessary, with a minimum of an annual review.