

# Supervisor's Guidelines for Responding to Concerns about Sexual Harassment

- 1.** Take the employee's concerns seriously. Listen carefully and thoroughly without defensiveness or jumping to conclusion regardless of your opinion of the merits of the situation or the people involved. Do not respond with phrases like, "Oh, that's just the way Alex is. Just ignore it." or "He did that to you! That's sexual harassment."
- 2.** Indicate approval to the employee for reporting the problem. Say something like, "Thanks for bringing this to my attention. It's important that I know about your concerns."
- 3.** Explain that your role is to obtain the facts and help to resolve the situation. Tell him/her you know it may be difficult but you need him or her to be specific. Ask the employee to describe the situation. When taking notes write only the facts. Do not write your opinion or evaluation of the situation. You will need to know:
  - Who:** Who committed the alleged harassment?
  - What:** What exactly happened? What was said? What is the relationship between the parties involved? Is there any documentation or physical evidence? Is there anyone else who has relevant information? Has the employee discussed the matter with anyone else?
  - Where:** Where did it occur?
  - When:** When did it occur?
  - How:** How often did it occur? How did it affect their work? How did it affect them personally?
- 4.** If the employee is unwilling to give names and details, this should be noted. Although the employer cannot use the employee's failure to provide information as a excuse to do nothing, without critical information the employer may be limited in how to respond.
- 5.** Again indicate approval for reporting the problem. Explain that you will handle to case on a "need-to-know" basis but that you cannot promise complete confidentiality. This means that you will discuss this matter only with those who must know about it in order to conduct a thorough investigation and resolve the matter. You should not discuss the situation with other friends and colleagues unless they truly have a need to know about it. In turn, request that the employee not discuss the matter beyond a "need-to-know" basis.

6. Provide a copy of Indiana University's Sexual Harassment policy and review it with the employee. Explain that the employee is protected from retaliation and that he/she should report any further incidents to you immediately.
7. Explain that it is important to discuss this matter with the person(s) she/he has complained about and possibly others who have information. Reemphasize that she/he should contact you if any further incidents occur.
8. Tell them that you will report back to them after the conclusion of the investigation.
9. You may also want to provide the employee with information about resources where he/she can get support through this process. This might include the university's Employee Assistance Program, Counseling and Psychological Services or other support services on campus or in the community.

**Stop!**

**After you have concluded your discussion with the employee contact your supervisor and/or the director of your department. Then contact the Office of Affirmative Action (855-7559) for assistance in proceeding with the investigation.**