

Preventing Sexual Violence and Harassment in Field Placements

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Introduction

This guide offers guidance for all research and professional activities on campus, including, but not limited to, field courses and placements, clinical settings, internships, and all involved in creating safe, welcoming environments for scholarly activities that take place “in the field.” This field guide is intended to expand illness and injury prevention in field placements to include prevention of sexual harassment and violence, stalking, relationship violence, as well as protection against retaliation for reporting such incidents.

The “field” may consist of off-campus work, internships, educational trips, professional conferences, data collection, expeditions, living at sea, visiting a local farm or garden, urban or rural environments, hospitals, and corporate settings, as well as domestic and international travel. Placements can vary in duration from minutes to years. Fieldwork offers high-impact research and professional opportunities and can also offer unique challenges to preventing and addressing sexual violence and sexual harassment. While behaviors such as sexual harassment are pervasive, it is important to be attentive to other harmful behaviors such as sexual assault, stalking, and relationship violence.

In remote settings, graduate and professional students rely heavily on team members, principal investigators, and supervisors for resources such as communication devices, transportation, food, and potentially emergency support. Participants may have limited access to personal, close support systems outside of their colleagues. Because of this dependence, if one of those team members is bullying, harassing, or perpetrating violence, the targeted individuals have fewer avenues for safety and support.

Chapman students may contact conduct@chapman.edu or the Dean of Students dos@chapman.edu. In addition, any Chapman community member may report a concern using [Ethics Point](#). Or see the [Institutional Compliance](#) page for more information.

The safety and sense of belonging for every team member are essential components of a successful field experience and crucial to the prevention of sexual harassment.

Structuring Field Placements for Safer and Respectful Experiences

This section offers strategies for departments and programs to consider before students go into the field. Research shows increased risks of harm when there are vague or nonexistent rules governing appropriate workplace and campus behavior. While the following information primarily addresses field sites, this can be adapted for a variety of internships and off-campus work arrangements.

Incorporate existing policies, codes of conduct, and requirements related to sexual harassment, violence, and discrimination into the field safety plan. Including:

- Field safety plan and codes of conduct
- Professional organization and field safety standards, as well as required prevention and intervention messaging and training
- Stay updated with what policies are required by the University
- [Student Code of Conduct](#)
- Students Rights Under Title IX
- [Policy on Sexual Harassment Prohibited by Title IX](#)
- [Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Prevention Policy](#)
- [Code of Ethics Policy](#)

Determine placement site by using this checklist of requirements that emphasize sexual harassment prevention:

- Placement supervisors and all employees must undergo sexual harassment prevention training
- Compliance with Chapman policy prohibiting sexual harassment, including protection against retaliation for reporting
- Address harm without adverse consequences to the graduate or professional student's educational opportunities
- Develop a departmental exit or re-location strategy for situations where a student is unsafe at a site/placement that does not impact the student's educational opportunity, course credit, or funding
- Regularly checking in with students and their field supervisors during the placement; discuss the organizational climate and safety with each of them during these check-in meetings

Preparing Research Team for Field Placement

Comprehensive education for all. Provide each team member going out into the field with prevention and response education that addresses the following topics: the impact of sexual harassment and violence, definitions of sexual harassment and violence (SVSH), resources to support healthy relationships and communication, power, and privilege, the use of alcohol and drugs in perpetrating sexual violence, and strategies for being an active bystander and fostering a respectful community while in the field. These educational opportunities are most effective when led by trusted peers; however, it is important to consult experts in the development of the content. Please contact EH&S for more information.

Access to communication. Ensure that all team members have access to reliable means of communication, such as Wi-Fi and/or satellite phone(s), with on-campus contacts programmed into the device. These on-campus contacts should include:

- the person(s) responsible for coordinating site placements
- Department Chair
- University administrative contact (e.g., safety officer for the department)
- the [Equal Opportunity Office](#)

These resources should be displayed prominently, every team member should have access to at least one communication device and resource list, and no team member should be in sole possession of communication devices or resource lists. And where possible, consider the support of the Human Resources department to file grievances or receive employee assistance.

Responsible employee obligations. Ensure that all employees are aware of their role as responsible employees and limits to confidentiality. If you are unsure, contact the [Equal Opportunity Office](#) (EOO) or Assistant Vice President for Student Affairs and Associate Dean of Students Lead Title IX Coordinator. Remember, if employees receive information related to a violation of the [Discrimination, Harassment, and Retaliation Prevention Policy](#), they must notify EOO and offer resources to the impacted person. They do NOT need to decide whether something actually occurred, and they should NOT investigate the incident.

Update policies and procedures on a regular basis. In addition to reviewing existing policies, collaboratively create or revise codes of conduct and ensure that all new team members are aware of the expectations before the start of the placement. Research team members can acknowledge their understanding by signing a contract.

Prevention is Possible

The best way to prevent violence is to model positive, respectful behavior for those around us. Here are things everyone, regardless of position, can do in the field.

Affirmative consent. Practice affirmative consent to ensure all interactions, both personal and professional, are respectful and healthy. Everyone engages in consent in everyday interactions. For example, agreeing to collaborate on a conference proposal or to hug someone. By regularly practicing affirmative consent, it becomes easier to apply in all relationships and interactions.

- Under the Policy on [Sexual Harassment Prohibited by Title IX Policy](#), consent is affirmative, voluntary, revocable, and a conscious decision by each participant to engage in mutually agreed-upon sexual activity.

Non-coercion and respectful alcohol use. It is never okay to use alcohol to lower someone's inhibitions or initiate sex with someone who is incapacitated and being intoxicated is never an excuse for committing violence.

Inclusivity, equity, and empowerment. Establish and uphold opportunities in the industry for women, people of color, and other marginalized groups, including ensuring fair distribution of work and granting equitable access to leadership and career advancement opportunities.. Ensure safe protocols for maintaining bodily autonomy in working and living spaces (e.g., comfort in shared accommodations, inclusive hygiene policies in remote locations).

Accessibility. In the physical environment, ensure that there is proper lighting, and tidy workspaces where people of all abilities can move freely, and reduce the distance individuals may need to travel between classes, fieldwork sites, and buildings and housing. If accommodations are needed, please work with your supervisor and with [disability services](#).

Develop group cohesion. Create opportunities to build collaborative and trusting relationships before team members arrive and while on site (e.g., team-building activities that are not evaluated). These opportunities should encourage open, respectful dialogue that promotes inclusion and belonging among team members. Ensure all field team members have clear channels of communication and support and are aware of local and national resources by publishing this information in the department newsletter, for instance.

Use affirming language and practice compassionate communication. Role model respectful and inclusive language for other team members and local community members. The following are examples of how team members can signal respect for others and create space to voice concerns.

- Encourage a practice where each team member shares their gender pronouns to avoid making assumptions about people's identities.
- Make sure everyone knows the correct pronunciation of team member's names.

- All team members have the right to communicate clearly, openly and with kindness.
- Affirm dissenting perspectives and appreciate feedback that is direct and courageous.
- Implement a regular practice of acknowledging valuable contributions of all team members, including appreciating people who were active bystanders.

Cues in the environment. In high traffic areas, post flyers with community-specific prevention and social norms messages and provide handouts on being an active bystander. For example, posting flyers or sharing messages that “92% of grad students would intervene if they saw someone engaging in harmful behavior” helps promote a positive social norm for team members. This is a powerful prevention message. Social norms data can be collected through department climate surveys and social norms campaigns.

Healthy boundaries. Boundaries exist in many forms: physical, emotional, intellectual, and sexual, as well as with time and technology. Define and maintain your healthy personal boundaries. Learn to respect others’ boundaries and recognize subtle ways in which someone might indicate their limits.

Examples:

- Consider the impact of power dynamics before sending a friend request to someone you supervise. This signals to the person that you have respect for their personal boundaries with technology, for instance.
- Separation of mixed sexes who are staying at the same location requires physical boundaries such as separate housing or living quarters. It is ideal not to have mixed sexes under the same roof unless deemed safe by Risk Management.

Remember that caring and open communication is necessary to ensure each person respects others’ boundaries and decisions.

Bystander intervention. Create a culture where team members support people who are being targeted by harm and harassment and choose safe intervention options. Examples of active bystander behavior include: directly addressing the problem behavior, bringing the matter to someone in a position of authority, redirecting the attention of the person causing harm, and supporting the targeted person afterward.

Supporting Those Impacted by Sexual Harassment in the Field

Challenges particular to fieldwork include unclear, new, or non-existent practices for respectful engagement. This can make it difficult to identify harmful behavior, seek support or notify authorities (e.g., supervisor, Human Resources, law enforcement, etc.) if harm happens for both those directly and indirectly impacted by the harm.

Tips for responding with care and concern to individuals who share that they have been impacted by harm or violence in the field:

- Listen to and believe them. Do not interrogate or make any assumptions.
- Reassure the individual who is disclosing that what happened to them was not their fault.
- Affirm that the decision to cooperate with law enforcement and/or EOO, tell others, get counseling, etc. is the individual’s choice.
- Do not pressure or force them to take any action—even if you think it’s the right thing.

- Validate and affirm their choices.
- Provide information and resources, especially about where they can find confidential support.
- Simply ask the person what they need.

Below is sample language you might use when responding to a disclosure. However, responding in your own words rather than using a script helps build trust and genuinely demonstrates care and concern.

Create a safe environment. Disclosing can be a vulnerable and scary process. Ensuring the survivor feels emotionally and physically safe in a space helps establish trust. Do this by verbally checking in and offering to move to a location of the survivor's choice. Avoid public areas where the conversation may be overheard. Say: *"Is this a comfortable and private location to talk?"*

Acknowledge them for approaching you with this matter. This helps communicate that you value their courage. Say: *"I know it can be very difficult to share these circumstances; thank you for trusting me."*

Clarify your Responsible Employee obligations, if applicable, and limits of confidentiality. Being transparent about your obligations assists in building trust and empowering the survivor to make an informed choice. Try to inform the survivor of your obligations before the disclosure occurs when someone first approaches you with a serious matter. If this is not possible, inform them of your obligations afterward and let them know the next steps in the process. Say: *"I have a responsibility to notify our campus Title IX office when I learn about an incident like this; I'm letting you know so that you can choose what else you share and what happens next."*

Connect them to confidential resources. Regardless of the amount of detail shared, connecting them to confidential resources gives them access to continuing support. You can offer to call together or provide the information to the survivor so they can call on their own. Say: *"I'd like to make sure you have all the information and support you need. Would you like to call the XXX together so you can learn about your options? Here is the satellite phone to call XXXXX - the number is XXXXX, if you would like to call on your own."*

Close and reaffirm your support: Say: *"I'm so glad that you're seeking resources. You deserve support."*

Chapman University confidential resources are also located on the Equal Opportunity Office website, under [Get Help](#).

After Field Placement

Field placements serve to inspire students and provide experience to become future researchers and practitioners. Ensuring the belonging and safety of every team member is a critical part of planning and implementing a successful field experience. Lead staff, such as Principal Investigators and field placement coordinators, should debrief research team members about their experiences in the field through satisfaction surveys, focus groups, written accounts, or other data collection methods. Consult current and former team members and colleagues about suggestions for ensuring inclusion and equity, preventing harm and violence, and sharing how conditions and experiences can be improved in the future. Whenever possible, create anonymous feedback opportunities.

Remove a site from future placement options if there are incidents of sexual violence or harassment. Communicate the concern and decision explicitly to the site and any other stakeholders.

For more information regarding this document, please contact:

- [Environmental Health and Safety](#)
Email: ehs@chapman.edu
Phone: (714)532-6021
- [Equal Opportunity Office](#)
Email: EO@Chapman.edu
- [Human Resources](#)
Email: hroffice@chapman.edu
Phone: (714) 997-6686