HOW TO HELP:
RESPONDING TO INCIDENTS OF INTERPERSONAL VIOLENCE

Below are some vital tips on how to be an active listener and provide support when approached by a student who is affected by an incident of sexual violence, relationship violence, or stalking:

BE CLEAR ABOUT YOUR ROLE
- Be honest and direct about the level of confidentiality you can provide before the student shares their experience.
- Only answer questions you are comfortable with and qualified to answer. Don’t be afraid to say “I don’t know, but I know how to find help.”

PROVIDE A SAFE, COMFORTABLE SETTING
- Avoid distractions such as a loud hallway.
- Stop all non-relevant activities and stay focused on the speaker.
- Respect personal space issues and do not touch the person without asking permission.
- Give the speaker time and space while they are talking.

LISTEN WITHOUT JUDGMENT
- Accept what you hear without judgment, and avoid “why” questions which imply blame.
- Believe the person. Regardless of who is involved, it is important the incident is taken seriously and not minimized.
- Allow the person to take ownership of his or her feelings, regardless of what they are.

OFFER COMFORT AND SUPPORT
- Validate the person’s experience by making gentle, clear, & empathetic statements. Here are some useful validating statements:
  - “I am sorry this happened to you.”
  - “I am glad you felt comfortable sharing this with me.”
- Do not tell them what to do or how to act.
- Be clear on the availability of resources and what they provide.
- Remain calm and reassuring and maintain your own emotional composure.
- If the person is overwhelmed or agitated, suggest they take a few deep breaths.

CHECK WHETHER YOU HAVE UNDERSTOOD
- Summarize key points to affirm your understanding & confirm the next steps you will take.
- Non-verbally acknowledge points while they are speaking.
Ask them what they need in that moment and allow them to be in control of next steps.

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF
- Hearing about traumatic experiences can affect you too. Utilize campus resources such as the Penn Women’s Center (215-898-8611), and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) (1-888-321-4433).
- If you are not sure what to do or say to someone, reach out to a support person for some advice and support.
- Be clear about what you are comfortable and not comfortable doing.

RESOURCES ON CAMPUS
Penn offers a wealth of resources to respond to and support victims of abuse and assault.

Emergency Resources (on call 24/7):
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) ...................................................215-898-7021
- Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS) ..................................................215-898-6600
- Student Intervention Services (SIS) ......................................................................215-898-6081

Reporting Resources:
- Sexual Violence Investigative Officer (SVIO) ......................................................215-898-2887
- Office of Affirmative Action/Title IX Coordinator ..................................................215-898-6993

Confidential Support and Referral Resources:
- Counseling and Psychological Services (CAPS) ...................................................215-898-7021
- Office of the Chaplain ..........................................................................................215-898-8456
- Penn Women’s Center (PWC) ..............................................................................215-898-8611
- Student Health Service (SHS) .............................................................................215-746-3535
- Special Services, Division of Public Safety (DPS) .................................................215-898-6600
- Penn Violence Prevention ....................................................................................215-746-2642