

What you can do after sexual harassment - A resource guide for graduate workers at UIC

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This is a living document with a list of resources for graduate students/workers in the Chicago area who have experienced sexual misconduct. If you are aware of any additional resources that should be listed here, please contact UIC GEO.

You are not alone.

You have community.

You are not at fault.

You have choices.

This guide offers steps that can be taken after you experience sexual harassment in academic institutions in the United States (U.S.), particularly within the city of Chicago.

Am I alone?

You are far from alone. The prevalence of sexual harassment in academia is [well-documented in all disciplines](#). For example, you can read about the prevalence of sexual harassment in the STEM communities in the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine report [here](#).

Dr. Julie Libarkin at Michigan State University has maintained the [Academic Sexual Misconduct Database](#), which details all publicly reported cases of sexual misconduct in academia.

If you need to talk to someone urgently who is not a mandatory reporter, please call one of the free, 24-hour hotlines below:

Chicago Domestic Violence Hotline is a 24-hour free, confidential and multilingual hotline offering various support services for victims of domestic violence. You can learn more [here](#), and **you can contact them at: 877-863-6338 (TTY: 877-863-6339)**

YWCA Rape Crisis Hotline is a 24-hour free hotline for those in the city of Chicago and surrounding suburbs. You can learn more about their services [here](#).

Dial 888-293-2080 for the Chicago metropolitan area.

Dial 630-971-3927 in DuPage county.

Dial 708-748-5672 in the south Suburbs.

Resilience has a rape crisis hotline for those in the Chicago area. You can learn more about their services [here](#). To access this hotline, dial: 888-293-2080

Apna Ghar has a 24-hour hotline and provides culturally-competent victim advocate services to

immigrant communities across Chicago to end gender-based violence. You can read more about their services [here](#).

To reach their hotline, dial: 773-334-4663.

You can also email them at: help@apnaghar.org

Mujeres Latinas en Acción is a victim service and advocacy organization that aims to empower Latina women in the Chicago area. You can read about their services [here](#).

24-hour domestic violence crisis hotline: 312-738-5358

24-hour Chicago rape crisis hotline: 888-293-2080

Trans Lifeline is a trans-led organization that has a 24-hour hotline. You can learn more about their hotline [here](#).

24 hour hotline: 877-565-8860

RAINN is the largest anti-sexual violence organization in the U.S.:

Website: <https://www.rainn.org/> (includes a chat option)

Their hotline is: 800-656-HOPE (800-656-4673)

The Trevor Project is a text and chat-based hotline for LGBTQ youth

Website: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/>

Phone: 866-488-7386

For texting: Text START to 678678

DAWN: An organization providing legal and trauma-informed culturally responsive medical and advocacy support services for survivors in the Deaf community. They have a 24-hour video phone hotline.

Website: <http://deafdawn.org/>

Video Phone: 855-812-1001

The Steve Fund: A text-based hotline dedicated to the mental health and emotional well-being of students of color

Website: <https://www.stevelfund.org/>

To connect: Text STEVE to 741741

Identifying Misconduct:

How do I know if I have experienced sexual harassment?

Your experiences are valid, and any behavior that bothers you—whether or not it fits legal definitions—is worth addressing. Here, we define sexual harassment as it applies to the U.S. workplace and higher education institutions such as UIC.

You can find UIC's sexual misconduct policy [here](#). A more comprehensive description of UIC sexual misconduct policy can be found [here](#) (last updated 09-16-2019).

U.S. Law

In academia, **Title IX** governs sex discrimination: “No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.” For details on the legal definition, you can read more [here](#). Read more [here](#) about Title IX and how to take legal action under Title IX.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act governs discrimination in public education (among other places): “To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes.” For details on the legal definition, you can read more [here](#).

In the U.S., sexual and other harassment are prohibited when it “[is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile or offensive work environment or when it results in an adverse employment decision](#)”. **Harassment must be severe (e.g., sexual assault) or frequent (e.g., multiple incidences of inappropriate jokes) AND must impact your work** for it to violate U.S. law. [Updated resources \(2016\)](#).

Union Contract

Sexual harassment and discrimination are a violation of the UIC Graduate Employees’ Organization (GEO)’s collective bargaining agreement (contract) with the university, which is a legally binding document. Article V of [our contract](#) prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender including gender identity and gender expression, age, disability (including mental and physical), marital status, order of protection status, genetic information, veteran status, ancestry, unfavorable discharge from the military, citizenship or immigration status, arrest record, or status as a protected veteran. Discrimination on the basis of GEO membership and activism is also expressly prohibited by the contract.

The contract further states that sexual harassment will not be tolerated and holds the university responsible for providing remedies when such harassment is reported in accordance with law and university policy. The contract allows GEO to designate two members of the union to meet with the university’s Office of Access & Equity for the purpose of providing input and policy recommendations once per year.

Reporting Misconduct:

How do I document my experiences with harassment?

Keep a record of all instances of harassment and include the time, place, date, and the names of witnesses. If possible, make records of how the incident(s) have impacted your work, classes, and/or research. Record all impacts on your physical, mental and emotional well-being. Keep all

text messages, emails, voice mails, email exchanges, save screenshots of interactions on social media, and save other records of electronic communication (including those on team communication platforms such as Slack, Basecamp, etc).

[Here is a step-by-step guide to documenting sexual harassment.](#)

Who do I report sexual harassment/discrimination to at UIC? What will my experience be like if I report and file through Title IX?

Most universities will have the following offices where you can submit reports of sexual harassment and other problematic behaviors. At UIC, this is the [Office of Access & Equity](#) (OAE). We strongly recommend you keep records of who you speak to about your experiences with sexual harassment. Collect names, dates, and topics of conversations. Below are some generalized recommendations based on multiple GEO members' experiences reporting sexual harassment/discrimination to Title IX/OAE:

Your Decision on What Action Should be Taken is Final

Title IX and the OAE may offer multiple options for how your case will be addressed, including “doing nothing,” mediation with a third-party, or a full investigation by the university’s offices, involving departmental and/or administrative personnel. Once these actions are completed, your case is considered “done,” barring further harassment or assault. You CANNOT appeal their final decision if the accusation is made against a UIC employee, but CAN appeal if the accusation is made against a fellow student. This makes knowing what the options involve and what the possible results could be all the more critical.

Timelines and Primary Investigators May Change

While the OAE claims in their Comprehensive Policy that they strive to finish their investigations within 60 business days, they are not obligated to stick to this timeline. Complainants reported contacting Title IX / OAE for updates and receiving noncommittal responses, new provisional deadlines which Title IX did not honor, or no response at all. Investigations may take up to a full year, or longer. Moreover, Title IX offices throughout the country experience a high level of turnover. Thus, even if you report to the coordinator, there is no guarantee that your case will be directly handled by them, nor that the person carrying out your investigation will ever contact you before it is conducted. Some GEO members reported not having spoken to the person responsible for their investigation until after the case was effectively closed.

Accommodations Can Only Be Guaranteed by a Full Investigation

When advocating for yourself and your needs, the only way to secure administrative changes like “separate days on campus” is to conduct a full investigation. With every other form of recourse, such as mediation or intervention, your requests are merely “suggestions” and not “requirements” where your department is concerned. This means that if you decide that you can only complete your graduate education under certain conditions, you will have to allow Title IX/OAE to officially investigate your complaint. More about how CAN can help advocate on your behalf for workplace accommodations is listed below in this resource guide.

· **Bringing an Additional Party(ies) When You Report Can Be Invaluable**

No matter how many times you may have told your story, interacting with Title IX/OAE will likely be the most stressful account you provide. For this reason, GEO strongly advises that an outside party accompany you to your reporting. **This can include a union or legal representative or someone from the Campus Advocacy Network, though we suggest you bring multiple parties (e.g. union representative and legal/CAN advocate).** Having someone else present to take notes, clarify why certain questions might be asked, and witness the proceedings can alleviate some of the anxiety of reporting as well as making sure that the investigator is properly handling your complaint. It can also be helpful later when you may have to respond to the respondents’ counter to your complaint, as both of those parties can help you throughout the process. This process has been overwhelmingly described as traumatizing and unhelpful, and the responding party is allowed to say whatever they want in response to your claims, even if it is irrelevant. Having an advocate and union support with you is invaluable to at least helping you feel like you are not alone and that you have others who care about your wellbeing and the harm that was done to you.

· **Compile Evidence Ahead of Time, If Possible**

Sitting down to make a report is the only time that you can be assured of a face-to-face interaction with a Title IX investigator or OAE representative. Thus, it is in your best interests to organize your supporting evidence before you even schedule a meeting. This can be especially challenging in that reviewing interactions or timelines can easily be re-traumatizing, with the burden on you to prove what happened and not for the investigators to “discover” anything (which is never in their interests, as employees of the university). **Working with a legal advocate and a union representative could help in this regard.** Members who were able to utilize both a legal advocate and a union representative discussed how working with them alleviated some of the stress of compiling all of this information.

Unfortunately, there is a Title IX time limit. **You have 180 days to file your complaint from the date of the incident.** UIC's Title IX office may also propose that you can mediate with your offender, but this is not required by law and you do not have to go through with it. [For more details on timelines, see the 'When to File' section at Know Your IX.](#)

UIC's Title IX office, the OAE, is built and staffed at the discretion of the university and for the university. Because of the inherent conflict of interest, TAKE SOMEONE WITH YOU TO ALL TITLE IX AND RELATED INTERVIEWS AT OAE. **Do not go alone. You are allowed to take anyone you wish to any appointments.**

A union representative from GEO can attend Title IX meetings with you. You can also reach out to the [UIC Campus Advocacy Network](#) (CAN), which has trained victim advocates who can attend these meetings with you. Advocates at CAN are not mandatory reporters and will provide confidential, free and anonymous services for UIC students. You can learn more [here](#). **UIC GEO strongly recommends that you bring both an advocate and a union representative with you if you decide to file a report with Title IX.**

Options Outside of Formally Reporting Misconduct:

What if I do not want to file a report with the Title IX office/OAE?

Talking with your union representatives (linked [here](#)) about possible interim measures as well as the [UIC Campus Advocacy Network](#) (CAN) are two avenues for more informal resolutions if you do not want to report to Title IX. GEO recognizes that, for many of our members who have filed reports, the Office of Access & Equity has been harmful, and we want to do everything in our power to minimize the harm our members have experienced. Unfortunately, most other supportive **members in your department/workplace are mandatory reporters**, which means if you disclose the harassment you experienced, they are obligated to report to Title IX/OAE (e.g. your faculty mentor is a mandatory reporter). We suggest talking to both your union representatives and CAN in order to support you.

One option is to meet with a CAN advocate to discuss all of your options for receiving workplace accommodations. Unfortunately, many of these accommodations are either not guaranteed or require you to make changes in order for accommodations to be made, rather than the harasser. But you do have options. Some of these accommodations include:

- 1) CAN can reach out to your department head to do a training/workshop on sexual harassment in your department without speaking about your specific case.
- 2) If the harasser has an office near you, CAN can reach out to your department head to work out alternative office accommodations for you. They cannot make the harasser

move offices without a formal complaint, but if you would like your office moved, they can work with your department head to do so.

- 3) If you are on a research grant/TAsip with the person who has harassed you (e.g. another RA or faculty supervisor), CAN can reach out to the department head on your behalf to try to work out alternative funding arrangements if you would like to be moved. This requires you to move, and you may not get the same type of appointment (e.g. you may have to take a TAsip if you are moved from a research grant).

There may be other accommodations which CAN can advocate for on your behalf, so speaking with an advocate to discuss all of your options is recommended. It is important to note that if the advocate reaches out to your department head on your behalf, **the department head will not have to file an official report with the OAE**. See more about mandated reporters below. If the department head is the harasser and/or you do not think they would be supportive, CAN will try to work with you to get what you need as best they can.

Who can I talk to about my experiences that are not mandatory reporters?

There are many advocacy organizations within the city of Chicago that are staffed with victim advocates, as well as resources available on campus that are staffed by people who are not mandatory reporters. Here is a non-comprehensive list:

[UIC Campus Advocacy Network](#) (CAN) provides free, anonymous and confidential victim advocate services for UIC students. **They are not mandatory reporters**. CAN has also compiled a non-comprehensive list (some of which are also described below) of resources in the Chicago area. You can find the list of resources [here](#). CAN is part of the [Women's Leadership and Resource Center](#) on UIC's campus.

[UIC Counseling Center](#) provides 20 free counseling sessions for graduate students. According to their website, all counseling is confidential. See their policy regarding confidentiality [here](#). To make an appointment, please follow the instructions on their [website](#).

Porchlight Counseling Services is a counseling service that provides counseling, educational workshops on campus, and other services to college students, regardless of gender, who were sexually assaulted during college. They also provide services to adults who are no longer in college but who were assaulted while they were in college or graduate school. Their goal is to provide high-quality counseling and services at no charge to the client. Their service area includes Chicago, Evanston, and Oak Park.

Phone: 773-750-7077

Website: <http://www.porchlightcounseling.org/>

If you would like to learn more about how to find legal assistance:

National Women's Law Center: The NWLC connects people who have faced sexual discrimination and harassment and who need legal and media assistance. They also connect you with help if you are facing retaliation from reporting discrimination and harassment.

Website: <https://timesupnow.org/find-help/>

Phone: 202-319-3053

Know Your IX: This organization, together with anti-violence activists, has curated a guide to finding a lawyer and list of victim rights organizations dedicated to finding pro-bono or contingency fee-based representation for survivors.

Website: <https://www.knowyourix.org/legal-action/finding-a-lawyer/>

National Disability Rights Network: This organization will connect you to legal advocacy services for people with disabilities.

Website: <https://www.ndrn.org/about/ndrn-member-agencies/>

Phone: 202-408-9514

TDD/TTY: 202-408-9521

LifeSpan Legal Services: This organization provides legal advocacy services, and **you can have a legal advocate present with you if you decide to report to Title IX/OAE.**

Website: <https://life-span.org/programs-and-services/>

Phone: 312-408-1210

****This is a living document. If you know of additional resources or information that should be added, please reach out to a GEO leader or our staff member, staff@uic-geo.net, and your edits and/or additions can be made.****