

2025 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

University of New Mexico

Health Sciences Center Learning Environment Office (LEO)

Relevant Rubric Areas:

1. **Prevention: Leadership Education and Skill Development**
2. **Response: Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors**
3. **Response: Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices**
4. **Evaluation: Other methods for monitoring climate on an ongoing basis**

Description of Work:

Institutional Context

Founded in 2019 in direct response to a Liaison Committee on Medical Education (LCME) citation for above-average and rising mistreatment rates among medical students, the Learning Environment Office (LEO) was established to address mistreatment, harassment, and discrimination within the UNM School of Medicine. Initially serving more than 1,200 MD students, residents, and fellows, LEO expanded over the years in services and scope. Most recently, in 2024, LEO expanded to include over 500 additional learners in the Colleges of Nursing, Pharmacy, and Population Health. Today, LEO serves more than 1,700 learners across the University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Center (HSC) and is **recognized as the largest and most structurally comprehensive learning environment office in the nation.**

LEO operates through its newly launched **three-arm structure: Response & Accountability, Culture, Education & Healing, and Impact & Innovation**, designed to pair restorative approaches with structural accountability mechanisms that drive lasting culture change.

Grounded in research-informed, trauma-responsive, and equity-centered practices, LEO aligns with national recommendations such as the *National Academies Report on Sexual Harassment of Women in Academia* (2018). In 2022, LEO was **interviewed for and highlighted in** the Association of American Medical Colleges' *Principles for Addressing Sexual Harassment in Academic Medicine* for **its innovative integration of trauma-informed practices into mistreatment response systems and underscoring its role as a national leader and innovator in creating safe, respectful, and inclusive academic environments.**

LEO is one of the few offices nationally that **fully implements all of the AAMC's recommended institutional strategies** for preventing and addressing sexual harassment (see appendix for details on this).

Key Activities and Innovations:

1) Response: Addressing Gender Harassment and Other Harmful Behaviors

LEO maintains a **confidential mistreatment reporting system** that accepts both anonymous and identified submissions. LEO is uniquely authorized to address concerns even in the absence of a formal Title IX or Compliance, Ethics, and Equal Opportunity (CEEEO) complaint, addressing a critical gap in

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institutional response.

Reports are received through a **trauma-informed intake process** in which staff validate experiences, provide supportive resources, and outline available options (including delayed action, a full fact-finding process, or closure) without pressuring the complainant toward any specific course of action.

All substantiated incidents are assessed using LEO's Mistreatment Classification Pyramid (originating at Stanford and Princeton) as a central decision-making tool in mistreatment response, ensuring proportionality and consistency in interventions. LEO's integration of the model into a broader trauma-informed, restorative-accountability framework has drawn interest from peer institutions seeking to replicate its application.

- **Levels 1–2:** Resolved through direct feedback, educational interventions, and/or coaching. (Substantiated via basic fact-finding.)
- **Levels 3–4:** Referred to the Mistreatment Response Committee for potential disciplinary action in coordination with department chairs and education deans. (Substantiated through a formal investigation.)

Throughout the process, LEO documents each case in a confidential database, safeguards against retaliation, and coordinates with institutional partners such as CEEO, the Women's Resource Center, and School of Medicine Office of Professional Wellbeing. **This integrated approach ensures that every report receives a consistent, transparent, and supportive institutional response.**

Evaluation and Continuous Improvement

LEO maintains a **robust evaluation infrastructure** that informs both prevention and response strategies:

- **Longitudinal Tracking** – Monitors trends in reporting volume, type, and severity over time across the HSC in general as well as across specific learning environments.
- **Behavioral Change Measures** – Tracks recidivism rates and documented improvement in individuals with multiple reports.
- **Qualitative Analysis** – Uses thematic coding of free-text learner comments to identify emerging issues and guide interventions.
- **Learning Environment Audits** – Conducted when specific learning environments have high volume or culture issues re that anonymously ask learners to provide detailed feedback for leadership to respond to.

2) LEO consistently analyzes its confidential database to identify and track patterns and trends.

Findings are synthesized in **annual and quarterly reports** shared with deans, department chairs, and program directors. Data is also used to identify high-incidence environments for targeted interventions and to inform **mixed-methods research** that contributes to the national evidence base on effective mistreatment prevention and response.

3) Prevention: Leadership Education, Skill Development, and Culture Reinforcement

Recognizing that department chairs and supervisors are **gatekeepers of institutional culture**, LEO delivers targeted leadership capacity-building and climate-strengthening programs:

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Leadership Education and Skill Development

- **Mandatory Orientation to Mistreatment Policies and Classification Tools:** Ensures consistent understanding of institutional definitions, thresholds, and proportional responses to prevent inconsistent or inadequate handling of concerns.
- **Skill-Building Workshops in Conflict Transformation and Feedback Delivery:** Trains leaders to address concerns early, engage in restorative conversations, and deliver constructive feedback that prevents escalation. Sessions incorporate real case scenarios from LEO data for maximum relevance.
- **Embedded Climate Benchmarks in Annual Reviews:** Integrates learning environment metrics and benchmarks into annual leadership evaluations, creating formal accountability for sustained culture improvement.
- **Consultation on Managing Repeat-Offender Cases:** Provides one-on-one guidance using a documentation-based supervision model outside the traditional HR calendar, enabling timely and effective interventions.

Culture Reinforcement

- **Learning Environment & Professional Wellbeing Speaker Series:** Features national thought leaders on inclusion, leadership, and wellness.
- **Building Inclusive Environments Speaker Series:** Offers a deeper exploration of pressing issues in the learning environment and medical and health professions education, with multi-session series on topics such as race and racism, gender identity, disability justice, and identity safety.
- **iTeach Recognitions:** Learner-nominated recognition for exemplary teaching and inclusive practices; shared with recipients and leadership to reinforce exemplary behaviors.
- **LEO's Inaugural Distinguished Teaching Award:** A competitive, HSC-wide honor recognizing four teachers annually who exemplify sustained excellence in teaching, model inclusive practices, and make significant contributions to cultivating healthy learning environments. Recipients are selected through a rigorous nomination and review process and are celebrated publicly with a stipend, certificate, and plaque to reinforce institutional values and inspire peers.

4) Response: Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices

All aspects of LEO's programming and response are grounded in a **trauma-informed framework** that centers safety, trust, choice, empowerment, and cultural humility. This approach ensures that individuals who report mistreatment are supported in ways that minimize harm, preserve agency, and build trust in institutional processes.

LEO operationalizes this commitment through:

- **Standardized Intake Protocols:** Designed to reduce the risk of retraumatization by using supportive language, clarifying next steps, and ensuring individuals set the pace for the conversation.
- **Safeguarding Dignity and Autonomy:** Response protocols prioritize the well-being and agency of those impacted while ensuring institutional accountability through clear documentation and

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proportionate action.

- **Clear Follow-Up Cadence:** Regular check-ins maintain trust, provide updates, and confirm continued access to resources.
- **Leader Training in Trauma-Informed Practice:** Chairs, supervisors, and other gatekeepers are trained to respond to concerns with empathy, neutrality, and consistency, spreading trauma-informed principles beyond LEO staff.
- **Healing and Supportive Spaces** (*in development*): Designed for all parties involved in mistreatment processes, including those found to have engaged in mistreatment, to promote reflection, repair, and reintegration when appropriate.

Impact: This embedded, systemic approach not only strengthens institutional accountability but also **increases trust in reporting, supports earlier intervention, and improves satisfaction with case resolution**. In the past year alone, **more than 35 leaders** have been trained in trauma-informed response, extending its reach across all four HSC colleges.

Novelty and Impact

LEO is nationally recognized for advancing comprehensive, integrated strategies to prevent and address sexual and gender harassment. In 2022, LEO was featured in the AAMC's *Principles for Addressing Sexual Harassment in Academic Medicine* and now serves as co-lead of the **National Consortium of Learning Environment Professionals**, shaping shared standards across health professions education.

Unlike models that silo misconduct responses into compliance offices or rely solely on punitive measures, LEO's **hybrid restorative-accountability model** addresses the full spectrum of harmful behaviors while building institutional capacity for prevention.

Key innovations include:

- Integrating learning environment reviews into department chair mid-point and end-of-year performance evaluations
- Adaptation and institutionalization of the Mistreatment Classification Pyramid within a trauma-informed, restorative-accountability framework
- Embedding trauma-informed practices into both response protocols and leadership development
- Launch of a three-arm structure embedding systemic analysis, healing, and transparency alongside accountability

Demonstrated Impact:

LEO's interventions have shown measurable success in addressing and preventing mistreatment. Internal evaluative data show that **93% of interventions successfully prevent future mistreatment**, demonstrating the effectiveness of educational efforts in shifting culture and ensuring accountability. Through these initiatives, UNM HSC continues to lead in fostering learning environments where all members feel respected, supported, and empowered to thrive.

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Next Steps (Prevention & Response Priorities)

- Publish first cross-college impact report on trends and resolution outcomes
- Launch centralized educational development hub for tools on improving climate, feedback, and accountability
- Implement faculty/staff mistreatment reporting with parallel safeguards
- Develop and disseminate a replication toolkit for peer institutions

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://hsc.unm.edu/medicine/education/leo/>

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Appendix

LEO Alignment with AAMC's Institutional Strategies

AAMC Recommended Strategy	LEO Implementation
Begin with zero tolerance	Clear policy on unacceptable conduct embedded into learner orientation, leadership training, and faculty development
Take a coordinated approach	Integrated three-arm structure; partnerships with CEO, Women's Resource Center, HSC DEI, and Office of Professional Wellbeing, Ombuds, Compliance, and other institutional offices
Hold chairs accountable	Climate benchmarks in annual chair reviews; mistreatment data in performance evaluations; consultation for repeat-offender cases
Leverage the parent university	Collaboration with central compliance, Title IX, HR, and equity offices; participation in cross-campus policy work
Hire trained investigators	LEO staff trained in trauma-informed investigations
Centralize and expand reporting	Single confidential reporting system for all HSC learners; accepts anonymous or identified reports
Address less overt harmful behaviors early	Mistreatment Classification Pyramid enables early intervention for Level 1–2 concerns via feedback, education, coaching
Use proportionate sanctions	Pyramid ensures proportional consequences, from educational remediation to disciplinary action, are applied consistently
Communicate transparently	Aggregate data and trends shared in quarterly reports; anonymized examples in leadership briefings
Train beyond compliance	Leadership orientations, conflict transformation workshops, Building Inclusive Environments series, and faculty toolkits