

Year 2 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

Utah State University

Respondent Education for Employees and Students

Relevant Rubric Area(s):

- Implementing restorative or transformative justice and alternative means of resolutions
- Reintegration strategies and programs – procedures for and ways to reintegrate those involved in sexual harassment cases

Description of Work:

In spring 2020, Utah State University's Office of Equity prevention team began developing and implementing a more robust education process for employee and student respondents (accused persons). Prior to that semester, respondent education was largely only made available as part of the sanctions for individuals who had been found responsible for a policy violation. The university's current respondent education process is now available to any respondent, with expectations for respondent participation varying based on factors such as seriousness of the reported behavior(s), request by a supervisor, and whether a claimant (target) has requested an earlier/alternative resolution. Goals of the respondent education process include giving respondents skills to not engage in the same behaviors in the future and building respondent empathy for the individual who was harmed by their behaviors.

The Office of Equity's investigation team processes all reports about potential sexual misconduct policy violations and makes the initial determination about whether a respondent should be referred to the prevention team for education. As part of the referral process, the prevention team meets with the office's case coordinator to review the details of the report and to determine what topics should be covered in the session. The "case briefing" meeting with the case coordinator also includes a discussion about how many discussion sessions the respondent is expected to complete. Respondent education most often occurs one-on-one with the respondent and a prevention team member, but entire units have been required to participate in a respondent training as a result of a report.

The content that is covered in the respondent education sessions varies based on the nature of the report and the skill-building that would likely help a respondent not engage in the same behaviors going forward. All respondents are reminded of relevant university policies and the associated prohibited conduct, with an emphasis on the type of conduct that was reported. The content of the skill-building portions is rooted in prevention education best practices and recommendations from other programs, such as the Science-based Treatment, Accountability, and Risk Reduction for Sexual Assault (STARRSA) project. Examples of skill-building content

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includes boundary setting, respectful communication, healthy relationship dynamics, consent, behavior accountability, and gender norms. The education sessions use PowerPoint slides to guide the dialogue, but they are not structured like a lecture and respondents are expected to be actively engaged in the dialogue with the prevention team member.

For respondent education that occurs as part of an earlier/alternative resolution or as a sanction from a formal investigation, the claimant is encouraged to work with the case coordinator to make requests related to the respondent education session(s) content. Earlier/alternative resolution and sanctioned respondent education typically includes multiple sessions and often incorporates a relevant podcast, video clip, or article(s) that the respondent is expected to review prior to one of the sessions. The case coordinator also tries to get feedback from claimants for respondent education that occurs outside of an earlier/alternative resolution or formal investigation. Claimants who are working with one of the university's victim advocates can also go through their victim advocate to make respondent education content requests.

The respondent education sessions have only been informally assessed through the session's "ending/wrap-up questions" (i.e., how will you use the information from this discussion going forward?) and exit interviews with the university's case coordinator or Title IX Coordinator. The prevention team is in the process of developing a formal survey to assess the success, effectiveness, and impact of the education sessions on the respondents. Once the survey is developed, it would be sent to respondent participants from 2020-21, as well as all respondent participants in the future.

Next steps for the respondent education process include continuing to finalize the standard operating procedures for the referral process, create new education content and updating existing content, and find additional ways to involve claimants in the process of creating the education content.

The respondent education approach is consistent with the recommendations found in the "response" and "remediation" sections of the 2021 Rubric on Areas of Work for Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education because it is a rehabilitation-focused measure that includes opportunities for respondents to learn, empathize, and recognize and value differences and helps them reintegrate into the campus community and/or their work.

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://www.usu.edu/equity/index>

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