

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

University of New Mexico

Ombuds Supportive Listening Workshops

Relevant Rubric Areas:

1. Prevention: Leadership Education and Skill Development
2. Prevention: Other efforts to address or prevent sexual harassment
3. Response: Trauma-Informed Programs and Practices

Description of Work:

UNM Ombuds Services (formerly Ombuds Services for Staff) began developing the Supportive Listening Workshops in early 2017, as the UNM administration and community navigated a period of rapid reform of its Title IX policies, procedures, and trainings under a three-year Settlement Agreement with the Department of Justice (2016-2019). Aware that most staff and faculty lacked preparation to listen and respond effectively to disclosures of sexual misconduct, Associate Ombuds Anne Lightsey piloted the first supportive listening workshop in May 2017, inviting campus advocates, investigators, and interested staff and faculty to participate in a 3-hour in-person workshop on responsible listening skills. In an institutional context where students and employees were subject to increased messaging and training about their responsibility to intervene and report incidents of sexual misconduct, UNM ombuds married their experience in conducting trauma-informed conversations with an increased focus on sexual harassment and related harms, offering staff and faculty needed tools to meet the moment.

This workshop and its later iterations are not like other, mandatory university trainings, which focus on defining sexual harassment and clarifying university policy and employee responsibilities. Instead, the supportive listening workshops are a unique, locally-created resource designed to allow participants to practice listening skills that model a constructive response to spoken concerns about sexual misconduct, in a manner that reduces the risk of causing harm to the speaker and empowers them to move forward constructively. Workshop participants are asked, for example, to:

- Reflect on whether they should, and whether they are able, to listen to accounts of sexual misconduct,
- Practice responding supportively while listening to (fictitious) reports of sexual misconduct, and
- Learn how to explore next steps with speaker (resources, options, listener's responsibilities, etc.).

Workshop facilitators set up structured exercises for participants to practice responding to disclosures of sexual misconduct, and provide postcards providing trauma-informed language for interacting with those who make such disclosures. Workshop materials also include clear lists of available campus and community resources, clearly indicating the level of confidentiality that targets can expect from each office. Crucially, the workshops encourage participants to consider not only their obligation to report, but also their ability to listen to disclosures, and offer strategies for handling personal or scheduling

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

limitations that might impact participants' ability to listen, as well as language for making a warm hand-off to trained, confidential resources on campus.

Since 2017, Ombuds has continued to deliver the 3-hour "Supportive Listening 101" to campus groups, along with a 30-minute version and two additional 45-minute workshops:

Supportive Listening 101: Listening and Responding Supportively to Accounts of Sexual Misconduct. In this 30-minute presentation, participants learn the essential DOs and DON'Ts for listening supportively without causing unintentional harm. Participants learn about four basic tools to help foster a safe and supportive environment for those speaking up about sexual violence and misconduct.

So...I Have to Report 101: Listening and Responding Supportively to Accounts of Sexual Violence and Misconduct for UNM Responsible Employees. In this hands-on, 45-minute workshop, participants learn how to let someone know, in a clear and supportive way, that they are a Responsible Employee (RE). RE includes UNM Faculty, Staff, Student Employees, Teaching Assistants, and Graduate Assistants. This designation requires that any report of sexual misconduct made must be reported to the Office of Compliance, Ethics and Equal Opportunity (CEEO).

Am I Ready to Listen? 101: Listening and Responding Supportively to Accounts of Sexual Misconduct. In this 1-hour workshop, participants reflect on the multiple variables that impact how to respond when someone wants to disclose an account of sexual misconduct. Participants explore eight of these variables and learn how to communicate their decision supportively.

Ombuds Services has delivered these workshops on request to many UNM campus units and groups, reaching over 1,000 people with "Supportive Listening 101," and more than 300 people with the other three workshops. Groups that have received the workshops, sometimes in combination or more than once, have included:

- Human Resources
- Academic departments and colleges (Biology, Libraries, Law, Pediatrics, Architecture, Emergency Medicine, Pharmacy, Medicine, Fine Arts, Internal Medicine, Neurosurgery etc.)
- Office of Compliance, Ethics, and Equal Opportunity
- Academic and Athletic Advisors
- Office of the President
- Dean of Students
- Career Services
- Department Administrators
- Residence Life & Student Housing
- Center for Teaching and Learning
- Women's Resource Center
- Division for Equity and Inclusion

Ombuds Services has evaluated its workshops on several occasions, relying on not only campus focus groups but also the statewide coalition of sexual violence organizations called The Network. These evaluations contributed to small changes and the diversification of offerings, and workshop content has

2024 Public Description of Work for Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

also been modified to respond to changes to Title IX regulations and university policy. Following the consolidation of staff, faculty and graduate student ombuds services into a single office in 2023, Ombuds Services now seeks to offer these workshops more widely and systematically across the campus, with a special emphasis on new staff and faculty orientations.

This work is new or uncommon for higher ed space (created, implemented, or revised since 04/01/2020).

Website for further information (if applicable): <https://ombuds.unm.edu/professional-development.html>

Point of Contact Name: JoEllen Ransom, Ombudsperson and Anne Lightsey, Associate Ombudsperson

Email Address for Point of Contact: alight01@unm.edu