

Creating Information-Sharing Agreements Among Stakeholders Responding to Campus Gender-Based Violence

POSSIBILITY
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Land Acknowledgement

This work is taking place on and across the traditional territories of many Indigenous nations. We recognize that gender-based violence is one form of violence caused by colonization that is still used today to marginalize and dispossess Indigenous Peoples from their lands and waters. We must centre this truth in our work to address gender-based violence on campuses and in our communities. We commit to continuing to learn and take an anti-colonial inclusive approach in all our work. One way we are honouring this responsibility is by actively incorporating the [Calls for Justice within Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls](#).

Dedication

We would like to dedicate this tool to all of the people who have come forward to share their stories and knowledge, allowing us to walk with them during such a difficult time. Thank you for your courage in seeking support and demanding better.

About Possibility Seeds

[Courage to Act](#) is a national initiative to address and prevent gender-based violence at Canadian post-secondary institutions. It is led by Possibility Seeds, a social change consultancy dedicated to gender justice, equity, and inclusion. We believe safe, equitable workplaces, organizations and institutions are possible. Learn more about our work at www.possibilityseeds.ca.

We hope this document will be a valuable resource to those seeking to address and prevent campus gender-based violence. As this is an evolving document, it may not capture the full complexity of the subject matter. The information provided does not constitute legal advice, and is not intended to be prescriptive. It should be considered a supplement to existing expertise, experience, and credentials; not a replacement for them.

We encourage readers to seek out training, education, and professional development opportunities in relevant areas to enhance their knowledge and sustained engagement with this work.

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About this toolkit

Creating Information-Sharing Agreements Among Stakeholders Responding to Campus Gender-Based Violence provides an aerial framework and instructions on how to collaborate with other stakeholders on sharing relevant information, both on- and off-campus, to properly respond to experiences of gender-based violence (GBV). This toolkit was formed in consultation and agreement with communities of practice across the country under rigorous consensus methodology with respect to the key considerations and characteristics described below.

This tool should be used in conjunction with two others:

- Record-Keeping Guidelines and Reflection Tool for Campus Gender-Based Violence
- Guidelines on Confidentiality and Reporting: Checklist Tool for Campus Gender-Based Violence Service and Support Agreements

Readers are strongly encouraged to review and use all three tools together to gain a thorough, nuanced, and comprehensive understanding of trauma- and violence-informed handling and management of records with respect to GBV experiences, reports, and disclosures.

Application

This toolkit applies to recipients of disclosures who need to share information for the purpose of coordinating a trauma-informed campus response to GBV, increase safety and wellness for those who have been impacted, and properly assess the risk posed to the community. Information-sharing agreements aim to coordinate and create a unified response to GBV by the post-secondary institution (PSI).

Introduction

Gender-based violence may be disclosed to a number of different units/offices and service providers within a PSI (Government of Canada, 2017; Tamburri & Samson, 2014). Those who are impacted by GBV should be able to rely on confidentiality when they disclose within the institution. Individuals that receive a disclosure of GBV may feel limited in their ability to share such disclosures, as it may compromise the trust of the person who has disclosed and been impacted by GBV.

To increase the safety and wellness of a person impacted by GBV and the quality of services and support they receive, strategic information-sharing among key offices and units is essential (Ending Violence Association of Canada, 2016; Ontario Women's Directorate, 2013). The absence of GBV-related information-sharing agreements with a trauma-informed and risk-assessment lens can create confusion and delay the implementation of much-needed safety measures and resources for those impacted by GBV.

Creating information-sharing agreements provides clarity on what can be shared, and outlines and identifies the limits of confidentiality for all information holders, as well as the person impacted by GBV at the PSI (Ending Violence Association of Canada, 2016). Creating an information-sharing agreement also articulates the minimum threshold as to when information must be shared amongst relevant offices and units.

Hosting a Collaborative Conversation on Information-Sharing Practices

To host a successful conversation, engage with the questions and suggested steps below. A thoughtful planning conversation will build relationships and engagement amongst stakeholders and help you create a common vision on how your PSI wants to respond to GBV-related information sharing.

Step One: Consider all the Roles in the Conversation

There are generally three roles in these conversations: **convenor**, **facilitator**, and **participant** (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, 2011).

A **convenor** will typically invite participants and organize the discussion or series of discussions. This person should play a central role in responding to experiences of GBV at your institution.

Reflection Question

Who, at my institution, is best suited to convene this stakeholder conversation and why?

The **facilitator** is the individual who moderates the discussion amongst participants and ensures that all viewpoints are heard and shared. The facilitator also keeps an agenda to ensure that the dialogue is progressing.

As with any conversation on complex issues, there will be a diversity of viewpoints and opinions. It is important for the facilitator to maintain neutrality in the discussion and refrain from sharing their own personal views; this will promote unbiased, generative discussion amongst all participants. If the facilitator is also the convenor, it may be important to be upfront about one's values in the discussion while encouraging healthy debate and disagreement. This will actively create the perception of neutrality, but more importantly lead to a robust discussion and, ultimately, a more useful information-sharing agreement (Born, 2012; Molloy et al., 2000; Stanfield & Affairs, 2002).

Reflection Questions

Who at my institution has the skills to facilitate a conversation/discussion amongst a variety of people with a variety of perspectives and can adopt an *analysis* that is trauma- and violence-informed and intersectional?

What can that person do to manage their implicit and explicit biases?

If I am both the convenor and the facilitator, and I hold a valuable perspective, who else can share that perspective in the conversation/discussion?

Are there any resources I want to make available prior to the meeting (e.g., *Guidelines on Confidentiality and Reporting*, your PSI's sexual violence policy, or any documents in Courage to Act's [Knowledge Centre](#))?

Participants have an important perspective to share on the topic at hand. They may hold critical knowledge that can inform why and how this information-sharing agreement ought to be formed. Participants might be an office, department, unit, or individuals. The number of participants will vary according to the size, nature, and location of your PSI.

Reflection Questions

Who or which department(s) need information held by another department to facilitate their work in responding to GBV on campus? Should that individual or department be invited to this conversation?

Are there any other individuals or departments that might benefit from joining the conversation?

How diverse are these individuals or departments? Do they subscribe to a trauma- and violence-informed and intersectional lens? If not, are they willing to attend training on these topics?

Are there any external partners that should be invited to this conversation?

Step Two: Consider the Logistics of Hosting a Conversation

When hosting a stakeholder conversation:

1. Create space for the facilitator and convenor to **debrief on the needs for the conversation** and **create an agenda** that is responsive.
2. **Consider finding a note taker** for the stakeholder conversation. Separating out this role can free the facilitator to concentrate on the conversation at hand.

3. If you are the convenor, **contact the identified participants** that you outlined in Step One, inform them of the conversation you'd like to host, and canvass them on their interest in joining the discussion, as well as any barriers to participating. Participants may be more likely to share those barriers over the phone or in person as opposed to over email.
4. **Timing** is an important consideration because the rhythm of the academic year may vary by office. As these conversations may be critical to your PSI, it is best to schedule them several months in advance to avoid cancellations due to competing priorities.
5. **The location** of the meeting is an important consideration. Hosting within your department may be convenient, but may give the appearance of a particular position. Choosing a neutral location is ideal.
6. Consider **sending out resources** in advance (e.g., *Courage to Act Report*). This allows participants to be on the same page coming into the conversation.

Step Three: Plan the Agenda

Planning the agenda in advance not only creates a structure for the conversation, but gives participants the opportunity to collect their thoughts and ease anxieties prior to potentially challenging dialogues.

Below are suggested items for discussion in the first meeting.

- Sample questions:
 - Why should we establish a process/practice of sharing information with one another with respect to coordinating our response to GBV?
 - What are some key characteristics and considerations in creating a process/practice in which we can easily share information?
 - What are the next steps in implementing this agreed-upon process/practice of information sharing?
- Provide anonymized case examples or scenarios that show the benefits of information sharing and/or illuminate the needs of each participant's office. Consider providing these scenarios in advance of the conversation.

- Wrap-up and/or next steps

Step Four: Host the Conversation

1. Convener Introduction

- The convener should introduce themselves and take the time to highlight why it is important to discuss the possibility of sharing information with respect to responding to GBV on campus. Emphasize how engaging a strong trauma-informed and risk-assessment lens can lead to a more coordinated response and also increase the safety of those directly impacted by GBV.

2. Facilitator Introduction

- The facilitator should introduce themselves and then ask participants to introduce themselves and their roles on campus (or off campus, if the participant is external to the PSI). If the participants are familiar with one another, their introduction might include why they think it's important to attend today's conversation. The facilitator may also want to identify the note taker and their function.

3. Conversation Guidelines

- The conversation can be challenging, as individuals may have strong competing interests. Such challenging conversations should be welcomed, as the results will create a more robust and rigorous product or process.

To make those challenging conversations as productive as possible, it may be helpful to ask participants to agree to guidelines before entering into the conversation. Below are some suggested guidelines for consideration and discussion.

- Be open and adopt a mindset of curiosity to other diverse viewpoints.
- Feel free to share your perspectives, successes, difficulties, and concerns.
- Try to stick to the topic at hand.
- Recognize that silences are okay.
- Recognize that disagreements can be useful.

Reflection Question

What other guidelines could you add that would speak to the group you are gathering?

4. Beginning the Conversation

- Upon agreement of the conversation guidelines, the facilitator can pose the first topic question for discussion, emphasizing that all viewpoints are valid and encouraging all to participate.

Topic 1

What would be the impact for your team if we were to establish a collective process/practice of sharing information for GBV cases?

Possible follow-up questions:

- *Whose viewpoints seem similar to your own?*
- *Whose viewpoints are you most curious about or want to learn more about?*
- *Amongst everyone's views, where is there a common interest?*
- *Do you need any other information to answer this question?*

If there is consensus that a process/practice should be established, the facilitator can move on to the next topic. If there is little or no consensus, this might be a signal to the convenor that more community development work is needed on why information needs to be shared for the PSI to have an effective and coordinated response to GBV. The remainder of the conversation might rely on the facilitator exploring why there is little or no consensus or attempting to build consensus.

If the facilitator is able to move on, they can pose the next topic question below and start the conversation with the “Background Considerations” handout attached at the end of this

toolkit. The goal of this discussion should be brainstorming what an information-sharing practice/process might look like. This discussion may take the bulk of, if not the entire, conversation and may need to continue over several meetings.

Topic 2

What are some key characteristics and considerations in creating a process/practice in which we can easily share information to assist our PSI with providing a coordinated response to GBV?

Possible follow-up questions:

- *What values or characteristics would this process/practice embody?*
- *What might each step of this process/practice look like?*
- *What are the ideal components of this process/practice?*
- *Are there informal processes that are already taking place within our institution that we like or could reflect on?*
- *What's our collective interpretation of our limits to confidentiality?*
- *How can we uphold the privacy/confidentiality of those impacted by GBV?*
- *How will we settle conflicts/disagreements?*
- *What challenges might we encounter in agreeing to and implementing such a process? How can these challenges be overcome? How can my department help other departments in overcoming their challenges?*
- *Do any of the stakeholders need to seek out approval before participating in such a process/practice?*
- *How will we disseminate the information-sharing process with other departments/campus partners?*
- *How should the information about a case be shared?*
- *When should the information about a case be shared?*

- *When we share this information about a case with other offices, how does the information get documented? Should an individual or an office be charged with tracking this information? (See example at the end of this toolkit.)*

When there is consensus on what the information-sharing arrangements might be, the facilitator can then move on to the final topic question below. This section of the community consultation will be concerned with taking action and documenting it.

Topic 3

What are the next steps in implementing this agreed-upon process/practice of information-sharing?

Possible follow-up questions:

- *Do we need to draft a terms-of-reference document outlining the process/practice of information-sharing that we developed as a group? What would be the pros and cons of putting this agreement in writing?*
- *If we don't draft a terms-of-reference document, how do we ensure that there is continuity of this agreement when staffing changes occur?*
- *If we do draft a terms-of-reference document, how often would we review it?*
- *When are we aiming to institute this new practice for all of us?*
- *Which department or individual will take the lead in instituting this practice?*
- *Who can help us draft a terms-of-reference document?*

Depending on the level of community engagement, this discussion might not be completed over the course of one meeting. If there is a high level of engagement, it would be prudent to have the conversation occur over a series of meetings, as opposed to rushing to an agreement. The convener can emphasize how it is important to ensure that all participants feel comfortable with the agreement.

Step Five: Continue the Conversation

Reaching agreement among the participants does not signify the end of this conversation. Rather, it is an ongoing process that will continually strive for better implementation and review of much-needed safety measures and resources for those impacted by GBV.

Topic 4

Safety is an ongoing conversation for those impacted by GBV. What is our plan for evaluating the agreement we created?

Possible follow-up questions:

- *Would it be useful to reconvene the group to evaluate the utility and effectiveness of this agreement in six months, one year, and/or every three years?*
- *How would we go about evaluating our agreement?*
- *When the agreement is reviewed, the following questions could be asked:*
- *What would you keep in the agreement?*
- *What were the gaps/successes of this agreement?*
- *What is important to incorporate in the next update of this agreement?*
- *How is this agreement updated?*

Summary

Internally sharing information can help increase safety for all on campus. Arriving at an agreement with various impacted offices and individuals can help create not only a coordinated response to GBV, but a consistent one. The above steps serve as general instructions on hosting and holding a conversation about establishing a process/practice for sharing information on campus.

Background Considerations for Discussions on Creating Information-sharing Agreements

Key Characteristics of the Discussion

Collaborative. Collaboration and partnerships are key to the creation of information-sharing agreements. It is equally important to identify the common goal held by all participants—increased safety for those impacted by gender-based violence, increased community safety, and the provision of high-quality care and support.

Trauma and Violence-Informed means acknowledging the harm endured by complainants and survivors, along with being aware of the impacts that violence has on their emotional, cognitive, physical, psychological, spiritual, and/or sexual wellbeing. Such acknowledgement and understanding should guide the creation of all processes, procedures, and support. Adopting such a lens avoids traumatizing individuals further and maintains their dignity throughout the process, procedure, or support they receive. Any information-sharing practice/process should be aware of this framework.

Intersectionality is the acknowledgement that an individual can occupy and be impacted by a number of political and social identities. Those identities and social categorizations can be understood under racial, gender, sexual, religious, disabled, class, and religious lines, to name a few. The overlap of any of these identities creates a complex system of discrimination where individuals face multiple oppressions. Information-sharing practices/processes should adopt this lens, so as to avoid excluding individuals who could potentially benefit from a PSI's responses to gender-based violence.

Relevant Membership. Only involve units, departments, and organizations that offer direct support, advocacy, and planning to those impacted by gender-based violence. Units, departments, and organizations that do not provide direct service delivery to people impacted by gender-based violence are not entitled to information sharing.

Informed Consent. Consent is typically required when information has been collected for one purpose and then used for another. Every effort should be made to gain the consent of the person impacted by gender-based violence. Privacy legislation allows information to be shared, without consent, in circumstances where there is a high risk of violence.

Alignment with Professional Standards. Information-sharing agreements imply that there will be a number of offices involved with a number of different roles and professionals assisting in the provision of a coordinated response to gender-based violence on behalf of the institution. Any information gathered and shared should be in alignment with each professional's best practice standards.

Key Characteristics of the Agreement

Coordinated. Identifying the office or individual responsible for the coordination and implementation of information-sharing minimizes any possible confusion and allows for the synchronization and integration of all information across the institution.

Identified Stakeholders. Only departments or units charged with ensuring the safety and wellbeing of the institution's students, staff, and faculty should participate in creating these agreements.

Consistent. Consistency in any information-sharing agreement can be upheld through either regular meetings and/or involving the same individuals from relevant offices. Such consistency built into the terms of reference of any information-sharing agreement will support continuity of care for individuals impacted by gender-based violence.

Timely. Immediacy is key to reducing risk and saving lives. For larger institutions, regular if not weekly standing meetings help participants respond more quickly in sharing information and avoid the stress of needing to find common meeting times. For smaller institutions, booking ad hoc meetings at the request of any of its relevant participants may be preferable.

Relevant. Each individual/office has different reasons to share or acquire information. Sharing information amongst other interested parties must be done thoughtfully, on a need-to-know basis, and with the goal of increasing the safety of impacted individuals. Set expectations by outlining to each of the different participants/offices what the other participants' information needs are, as well as privacy obligations/limitations.

Example: Student Case Management Agenda

Date:

Invitees:

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