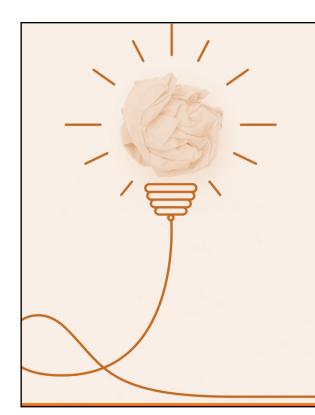
Sexual Misconduct Investigations – Interview Approaches & Investigation Report

Krista Anderson, Systemwide Title IX Coordinator Sean Flammer, Assistant General Counsel

Spring 2022



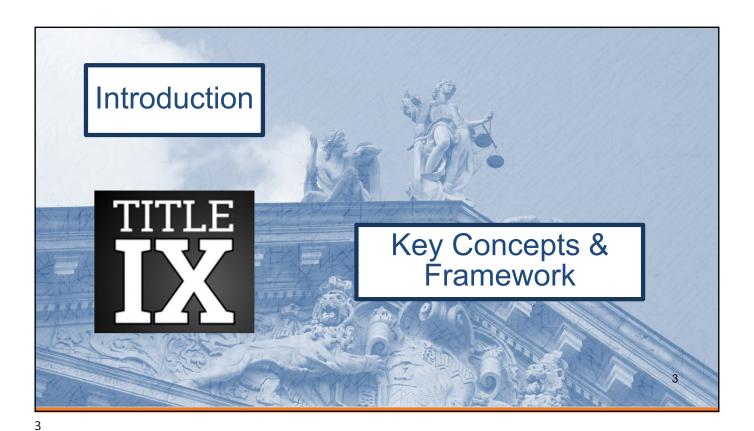
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Agenda

- 1. Title IX Intro
- 2. Overview of Initial Steps & Ongoing Elements
- Interview Approaches & Example Prompts
 - General Approaches
 - Non-Stranger Sexual Assault Cases
 - Incapacitation vs. Intoxication
 - IPV & Stalking Cases
 - False Complaint & False Information Cases
- 4. Investigation Report

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Sexual Harassment

Severe Pervasive Obj. Offensive

Sexual Assault Dating Violence Domestic Violence Stalking

VS.

Non-Sexual Harassment

Ex. Other Inappropriate Sexual Conduct

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THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS SYSTEM

Definition of "Sexual Harassment" under Title IX

Conduct on the basis of sex that satisfies one or more of the following:

- An <u>employee</u> of the institution conditioning the provision of an aid, benefit, or service of the institution on an individual's participation in unwelcome sexual conduct (Quid Pro Quo);
- Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be <u>so severe, pervasive,</u> <u>and objectively offensive</u> that it effectively denies a person equal access to the institution's education program or activity; or
- 3. "Sexual assault," "dating violence," "domestic violence," or "stalking" as defined under Clery/VAWA.



Source: Title IX Regulations (2020)

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#2 Element Examples

- "Severe": Physically threatening or humiliating; effects of the alleged conduct to a reasonable person (using a "reasonable person" standard)
- "Pervasive": Frequency, duration of the alleged conduct
- "Objectively offensive": To a reasonable person (using a "reasonable person" standard)
- "Reasonable person" standard: An <u>objective test</u> to denote a hypothetical person who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct <u>under similar</u> <u>circumstances</u> as a comparative standard.
- "Effectively denies...equal access": Totality of the circumstances

For example, the degree of the alleged conduct's interference with the CP or effects in an educational setting, type of alleged conduct, frequency and duration of the conduct, knowingly unwelcome in nature

"Education program or activity" under Title IX

Includes <u>locations</u>, <u>events</u>, <u>or</u> <u>circumstances</u> over which the institution exercises **substantial control** over both the respondent and the context in which the alleged sexual harassment occurs, and also includes <u>any building owned or controlled by a student organization</u> that is officially recognized by the institution.

 Example of a "building owned or controlled by a student organization": Fraternity or sorority house that is occupied by students of the organization, and the student organization is a recognized organization with the institution.



Source: Title IX Regulations (2020)

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Definition of "Other Inappropriate Sexual Conduct"

Conduct on the basis of sex that does not meet the definition of "sexual harassment" (under the Model Policy), but is

- Verbal conduct (including through electronic means), unwanted statements of a sexual nature intentionally stated to a person or group of people, that are objectively offensive to a reasonable person and also so <u>severe or pervasive</u> that it created a Hostile Environment, as defined in the Model Policy.
- 2. Physical conduct...



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

"Other Inappropriate Sexual Conduct" Cont.

Possible Examples (depending on facts):

- Unwelcome sexual advances (including explicit or implicit proposition(s) of sexual contact or activity);
- Requests for sexual favors (including overt or subtle pressure);
- Gratuitous comments about an individual's sexual activities or speculation about an individual's sexual experiences;
- Gratuitous comments, jokes, questions, anecdotes or remarks of a sexual nature about clothing or bodies;
- Persistent, unwanted sexual or romantic attention;
- Exposure to sexually suggestive visual displays such as photographs, graffiti, posters, calendars or other materials;
- Deliberate, repeated humiliation or intimidation;
- Sexual exploitation;
- · Unwelcome intentional touching of a sexual nature; or
- Deliberate physical interference with or restriction of movement.



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

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Key Pillars: Title IX Process Impartiality Respect For all of the participants in the process: Complainants Respondents Witnesses Third-party Reporters

Serving Impartially in Your Role

- Must avoid prejudgment of the facts at issue
- Must avoid conflicts of interest
- Must avoid bias





Source: Title IX Regulations (2020)

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Principles for Title IX Process



- Must maintain complete neutrality & impartiality at all times in investigating alleged conduct violations of institutional policies.
- Understanding bias & whether it exists: Need to take an "objective, common sense approach to evaluating whether a person serving in a role is biased." (Title IX Preamble (2020))...

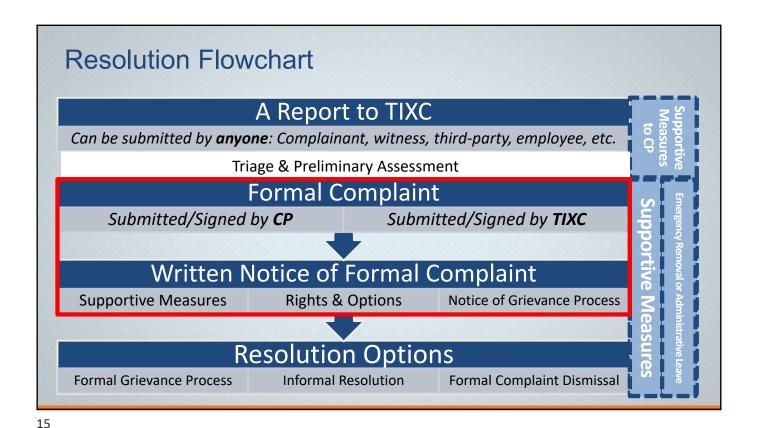


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Must **not** treat a party differently: On the basis of the person's sex; o On stereotypes about how men or women behave with respect to sexual violence; and/or **Avoiding** On the basis of the person's Bias characteristics: sex, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, immigration status, financial ability, socioeconomic status, or other characteristic. Source: Title IX Preamble (2020) 13 THE UNIVERSITY of TEXAS SYSTEM

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Formal Grievance Process Flowchart (Zoomed-In)
Sexual Misconduct Cases

Formal Complaint/Notice Issued

Investigation Initiated
Gathering Evidence Witness Interviews

Process Resolution Options
Investigation Report Informal Resolution Formal Complaint Dismissal

Next Steps (if applicable)
Adjudication Appeal F.C. Dismissal



Investigative Framework

- Establish facts & timeline(s).
- Understand each party's perception & experiences of the alleged incident(s).
- Elicit details & descriptions of the alleged incident(s) from the parties & witnesses.
- Address disputed facts or conflicting evidence (if any) & seek responses from the parties (if applicable).
- Gather sufficient information available for a determination of facts, importance, & relevance to the formal complaint.







Investigator Considerations

- One or two investigators?
- Roles of each investigator?
 - Facilitator
 - Notetaker
- Interview notetaking or recording?

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Look at the Provision(s) at Issue:

Engaging in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that would cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.

For the purposes of this definition:

- Course of conduct means two or more acts, including, but not limited to, acts in which the stalker directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about a person, or interferes with a person's property.
- Reasonable person means a reasonable person under similar circumstances and with similar identities to the
- Substantial emotional distress means significant mental suffering or anguish that may, but does not necessarily, require medical or other professional treatment or counseling. 20



Look at the Provision(s) at Issue:

Engaging in a (1) course of conduct (2) directed at a specific person that would (3) cause a reasonable person to fear for his or her safety or the safety of others or suffer substantial emotional distress.

For the purposes of this definition:

- but not limited to, acts in which the stalker directly, indirectly, or through third parties, by any action, method, device, or means, follows, monitors, observes, surveils, threatens, or communicates to or about a person, or interferes with a person's property.
- Reasonable person means a reasonable person under similar circumstances and with similar identities to the victim.
- Substantial emotional distress means significant mental suffering or anguish that may, but does not necessarily, require medical or other professional treatment or counseling.







- A. Encourages all participants to share what they are able to recall about their experience without demanding chronological recall; and
- B. Facilitates the gathering of information in a balanced manner from all individuals



Interview Notice

- Date, time, & location of the interview meeting
- Names of the invited or expected meeting participant(s)
- Purpose of the meeting or investigative interview
- Opportunity to present any information, evidence, and/or witnesses relevant to the formal complaint.
- An advisor of choice may attend, though not required.

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Pre-Interview: Rapport-Building Prompts

- "Help me understand how you are feeling right now."
- "What, if anything, can I explain to you about this process before we get started?"

Note: Consider possible **barriers** or **concerns** to building trust with a participant.

How can you minimize or eliminate these factors?

Source: Forensic Experimental Trauma Interview (FETI)

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Pre-Interview: Explain the Process

"Before we begin, would it be okay if I talked about information that I am required to share with you?"

What to expect of the process

Applicable policies; amnesty for alcohol/drug use; prohibition of retaliation

Rights of the parties

Purpose for the interview

Options for decision-making

Resources & supportive measures available

Title IX Coordinator & investigator(s) contact information

Follow-up & next steps

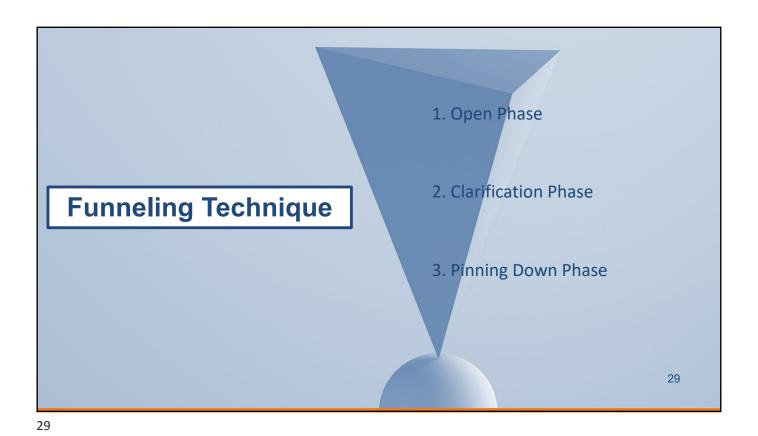
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Body Language & Nonverbal Cues

- Small head nods (periodic, not overly animated)
- Eye contact (be attentive, soften eyes)
- Facial expressions (show genuine interest, avoid emotional movements/reactions)
- Open body language (limit crossed arms or legs)
- Focus on your breathing (mental mindfulness)
- Take pauses between questions/cues (pace yourself)
- Listen with your eyes and ears
- · Check-in (when appropriate):
 - o "Help me understand how you are feeling right now."



Interview Start (Open Phase)

Allow the person to provide their account of the incident in their own words & at their own pace:

"What are you able to tell me about your experience?"

Allow time for the person to respond.

Do not ask a lot of questions at first.

Be patient & respectful.

Be comfortable with silence.

Nodding or "Mmm" are ok (shows interest).

Follow-up (if a general prompt is necessary):

What, if anything, do you remember once you...[insert last part]...?

Clarification & Follow-ups (Clarification Phase)

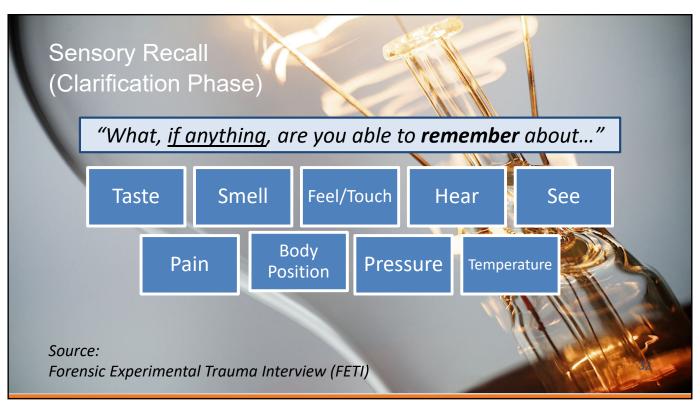
Attempt to clarify from <u>all</u> parties. Examples...

- "Tell me more about [blank]..."
- "When you said [blank]...help me understand what you meant..."
- What, if anything, do you remember once you...[insert last part]...?
- Instead of asking "Why or why not...?"

 "Help me understand your thought process for [insert the clarifying part]...
- "What did you mean by [blank]...?
- "How do you know about [blank]...?
- "There are differences in your account vs. [blank]...[insert specifics] ...help me understand the reason(s) or rationale for this different account...



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Recall (Cont.)

Instead of asking "Why or why not...?"

Ask "What was your thought process ...?

- o ...During [blank]?"
- o ...Before [blank]?"
- o ...After [blank]?"
- "What, if anything, are you able to **remember** about...?
- "What were your **reactions** to...?"
 - o Emotional response?
 - o Physical response?
- "What was the most difficult part of [blank]?"
- "What, if anything, can't you forget about... [before/after]...?"

Source:

Forensic Experimental Trauma Interview (FETI)

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Statement Gaps or Ambiguities (Pinning Down Phase)

Туре	Example Statements		Interview Approaches
Text Bridges	 After that The next thing I knew Later on 	 Afterwards Besides And then Finally	Clarification prompt
Ambiguous Responses	Kind ofI thinkSort ofI believe	To the best of my knowledgeI may haveMaybe	Clarification or recall prompt
Broad Statements	• Always	Everyone	Clarification prompt; specific examples?
Hearsay	• I heard from Person X that		Clarification prompt; personal knowledge or first-hand experience?

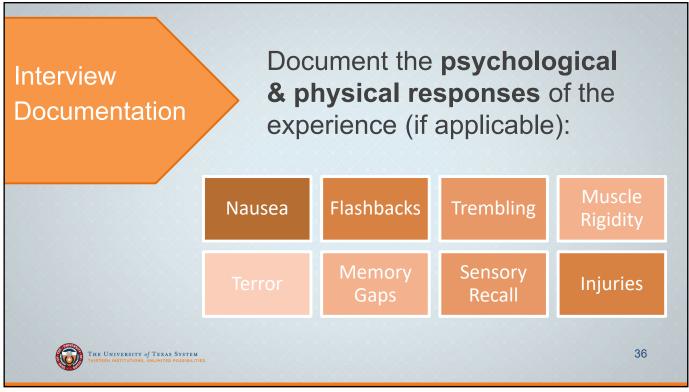
Misc. Interview Prompts (Pinning Down Phase)

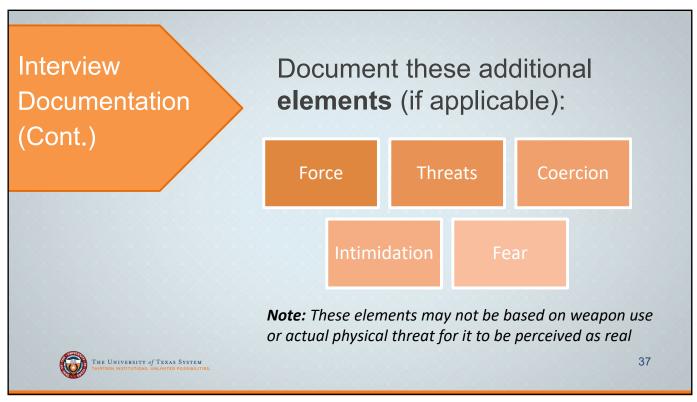
Example Interview Prompts	Purpose of the Prompt	
"Let me give you this information so that you can respond"	Provides an opportunity to respond to other testimony, statements, or evidence.	
"It's been reported that you said X, Y, and Z."	Responding to a denial; corroboration.	
"What's the reason that Person X said/did [blank] with this specificity, if you didn't?"	Responding to a denial; corroboration.	
"Others have reported you said [blank]. What's the reason (or rationale) for considering that you didn't?"	Responding to "I don't recall"; corroboration; credibility	
"Is there anything else that you'd like to add to this statement?	Provides an opportunity to respond; gather information not explicitly asked about.	

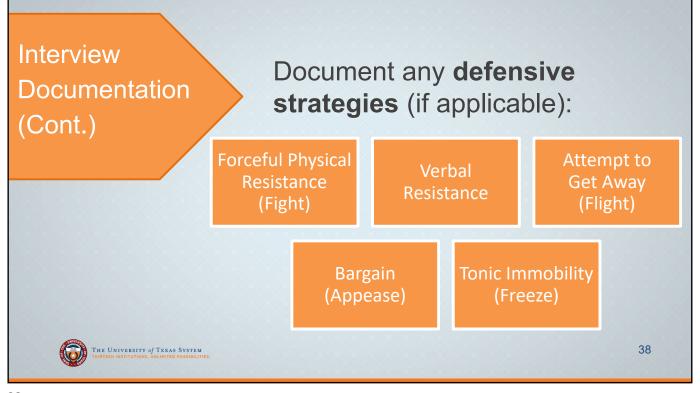
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Interview Wrap-Up

Show appreciation:

"I really appreciate you being willing to speak with me."





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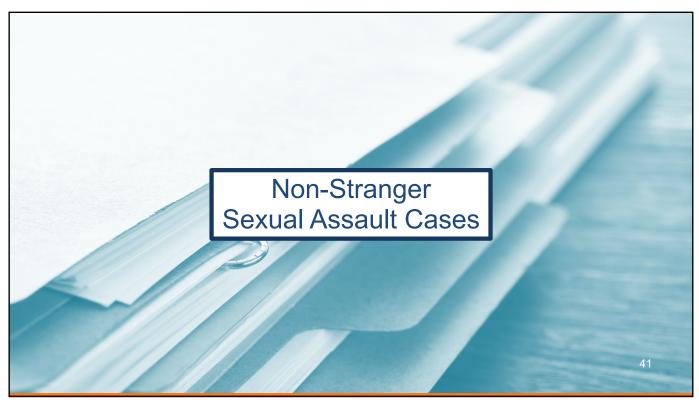
Interview Wrap-Up

Explain the following:

- Revisit what to expect for next steps of the process, person's rights, person's options, resources available, and applicable remedies
- Decision options (and timelines or deadlines, if applicable)
- Ways to provide evidence, witnesses, or respond to other party's statements
- Contact information for the investigator and/or TIXC/Deputy







Consent Definition

A **voluntary**, **mutually understandable agreement** that clearly indicates a willingness to engage in each instance of sexual activity. Consent to one act does not imply consent to another. Consent to engage in sexual activity with one person does not imply consent to engage in sexual activity with another. Consent can be withdrawn at any time. Any expression of an unwillingness to engage in any instance of sexual activity establishes a presumptive lack of consent.

<u>Consent is not effective if it results from</u>: (a) the use of physical force, (b) a threat of physical force, (c) intimidation, (d) coercion, (e) incapacitation or (f) any other factor that would eliminate an individual's ability to exercise his or her own free will to choose whether or not to have sexual activity.

A current or previous dating or sexual relationship, by itself, is not sufficient to constitute consent. Even in the context of a relationship, there must be a voluntary, mutually understandable agreement that clearly indicates a willingness to engage in each instance of sexual activity.



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

Consent (Example Questions/Considerations)

- Refer to the definition of "consent" based on the institution's policy.
- What was the nature, timing, & scope of the relationship btwn the parties?
- What were each party's expectations (e.g. perceived, communicated), about the nature of the contact on the date of the alleged incident?
- What was the manner of communication **before**, **during**, **& after** the alleged incident (e.g. words & actions) btwn the parties?
- What were the circumstances of the CP's disclosure (of a possible sexual assault) & the RP's reaction to the disclosure?
- Who initiated the sexual activity (that is at issue in the allegation(s))? How so, or in what way?
- What was the impact of alcohol or other drug use in relation to the ability to give consent?
- Are there any reported or demonstrated predatory behaviors?
- For RP (if applicable): What words or actions by CP indicated consent to sexual activity?



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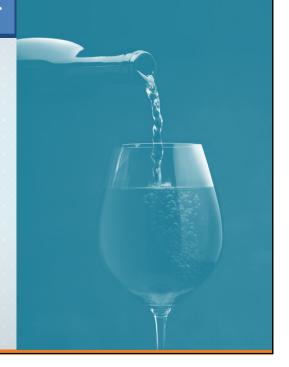
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First...Establishing Consent

Consent is not effective if:

- Physical force;
- · Threat of physical force;
- Intimidation;
- · Coercion; or
- Incapacitation
- Other factors?





Incapacitation Definition

Incapacitation is the inability, temporarily or permanently, to give consent because the individual is mentally and/or physically helpless, either voluntarily or involuntarily, or the individual is unconscious, asleep, or otherwise unaware that the sexual activity is occurring. An individual may be incapacitated if they are unaware at the time of the incident of where they are, how they got there, or why or how they became engaged in a sexual interaction.

When alcohol is involved, incapacitation is a state beyond drunkenness or intoxication. When drug use is involved, incapacitation is a state beyond being under the influence or impaired by use of the drug. Alcohol and other drugs impact each individual differently, and determining whether an individual is incapacitated requires an <u>individualized</u> determination.



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

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Intoxication:

- Slurred speech
- Weaving or stumbling while walking
- Exaggerated emotions



Incapacitation*:

- Mentally or physically helpless
- Unconscious
- Asleep
- Unable to speak coherently or walk unassisted
- Unaware of the sexual activity occurring
- Unaware of time, place, or how they became engaged in a sexual act
- A state beyond drunkenness or intoxication

* Using a "reasonable person" standard

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Incapacitation Definition (Cont.)

After establishing that a person is in fact incapacitated, the University asks:

- 1. Did the **person initiating sexual activity** know that the other party was incapacitated? And if not...
- 2. Should a **sober, reasonable person in the same situation** have known that the other party was incapacitated?

If the answer to either of these questions is "YES," consent was absent and the conduct is likely a violation of this Policy.

Note: A Respondent will be found to have violated policy only if the **Respondent** knew or should have known that the person was incapacitated.



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

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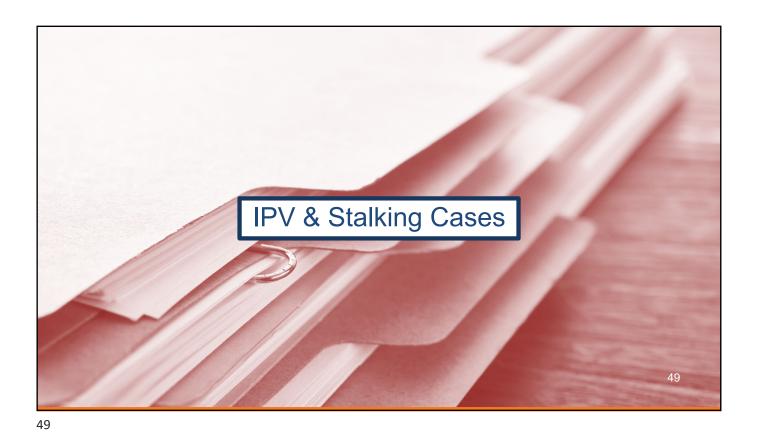
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Incapacitation (Example Questions/Considerations)

- What were each person's pre-incident behavior?
- Quantity & quality of alcohol & other drug use:
 - What was the nature of the event & setting?
 - Was there any respective power or control of either party?
 - Who supplied the alcohol or other drug(s) to either party?
- What were each person's expectations & mindset?
- How did each person reasonably know the level of intoxication of the other party?
- Is there any information from witnesses, video footage, etc. as to the level of incapacitation?
- What were each person's post-incident behavior?







Determining Predominant Aggressors

Common Considerations:

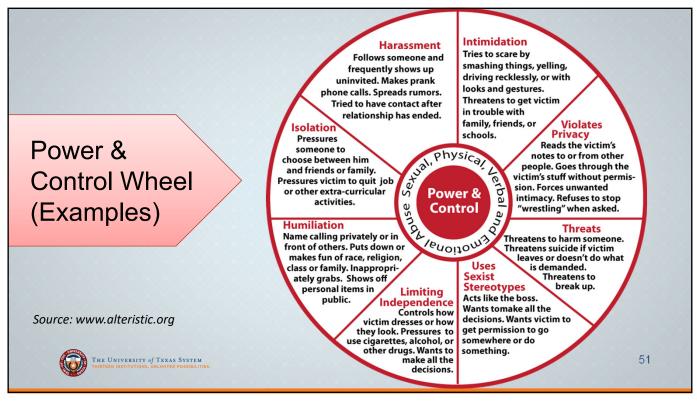
- Indicators of power & control
- Presence or threat of a weapon
- History of dating or domestic violence
- Aggressive or hostile body language
- Pre-existing protective orders or "no contact" directives
- Comparative extent of injury (if both are injured)
- Property damage
- · Elements of fear

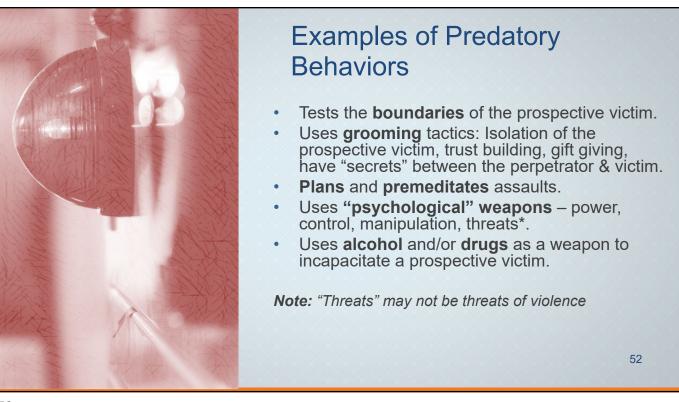
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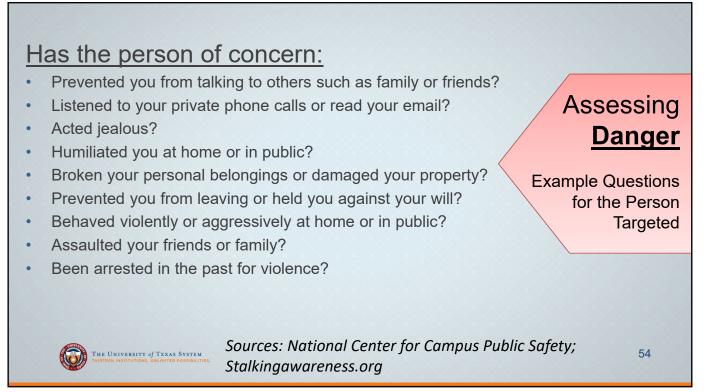
The National Center for Campus Public Safety

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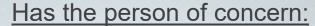


Type of Response	Example Statements		
Dismissive	 I <u>never</u> said/did that. <u>Your</u> memory is bad. I don't remember it that way. 	 That didn't happen. [or] That's not what happened. I have no idea what you are talking about. 	
Minimizing	 It's <u>only</u> a joke. [or] It's not that bad. We're <u>just</u> having fun. 	Nobody got hurt.What's the big deal?	
Rationalizing or Making Excuses	 This wasn't ever an issue before now. I said/did because I didn't even know I did anything. I didn't mean it like that. 	 That's not how things used to be. No one else is saying anything. Others, even you, do the same thing too. 	
Attacking or Defensive	 You're too sensitive. [or] You're overreacting. You're petty. [or] You're jealous. You are taking it the wrong way. You think you are better than everyone else. You can't take a joke. This is why nobody likes you. 	 It's your fault because What about when you said/did? Why are you so emotional? You're letting your emotions get the better of you. Who told you that? What did they say? What do you have to back that up? 	



Assessing Lethality

Example Questions for the Person Targeted



- Have access to a weapon, and/or threatened to use a weapon?
- Threatened to harm or kidnap your children?
- Threatened to kill you, themselves, or others?
- Harmed your pet(s)?
- Been abusing alcohol or drugs?
- Stalked or followed you? Showing up unannounced?
- Forced confrontation(s) with you?
- Forced you or your children to flee in the past?



Sources: National Center for Campus Public Safety; Stalkingawareness.org

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Definition of "False Complaints & False Information" Any person, who in <u>bad faith</u>, <u>knowingly</u> files a false complaint (under the Policy) or provides <u>materially false information</u> is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal or separation from the University.

A determination that a Respondent is not responsible for allegations of Sexual Misconduct does not imply a report, Formal Complaint, or information provided was false. Similarly, a determination that a Respondent is responsible for a policy violation does not imply that a Respondent's statements disclaiming responsibility were false.



Source:

UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

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Knowingly... (Examples)

Knowingly files a false complaint or provides materially false information...

- Showing intent to deceive;
- A design to induce belief in a falsity or to mislead; or
- Acted with knowledge or awareness of the falsity...
 and not because of mistake, accident, or some other
 reasonable reason.



Understanding Deception

Deception doesn't necessarily equate to someone knowingly filing a false complaint or providing materially false information.

Lack of open information-sharing may result from: uneasiness or uncertainty of the grievance process, distrust of University officials, lack of rapport, or deceptive intent, among other possible reasons.



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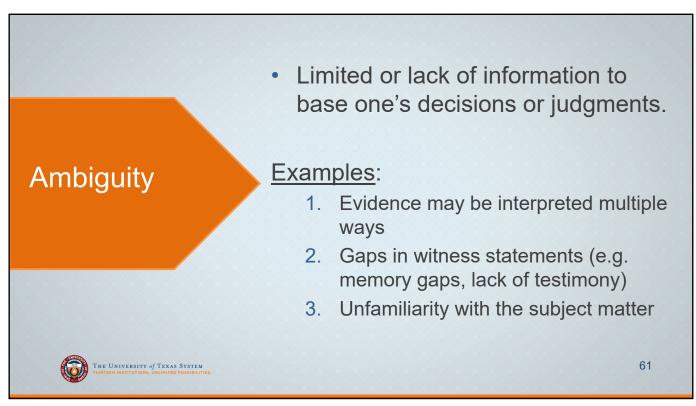
Detecting Possible Deception (Examples)

Verbal Elements	
Falsities	
Omissions	
Minimization	
Text bridges	
Ambiguous statements	
Broad statements	
Answers question with a question	
Does not answer the question asked	
Disjointed or inconsistent answers	

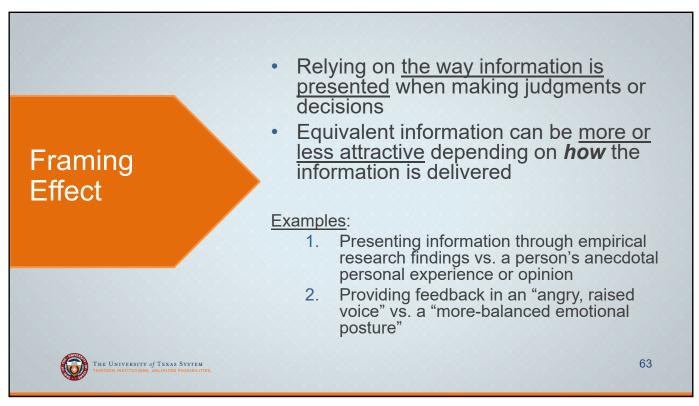


Remember: There may be <u>other plausible reasons</u> a person may present with these types of characteristics too.

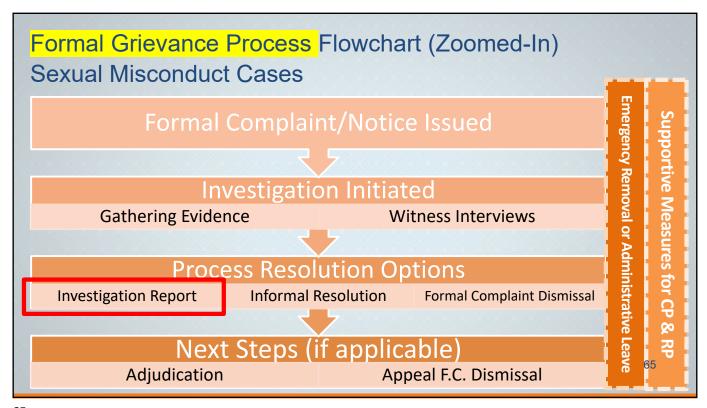
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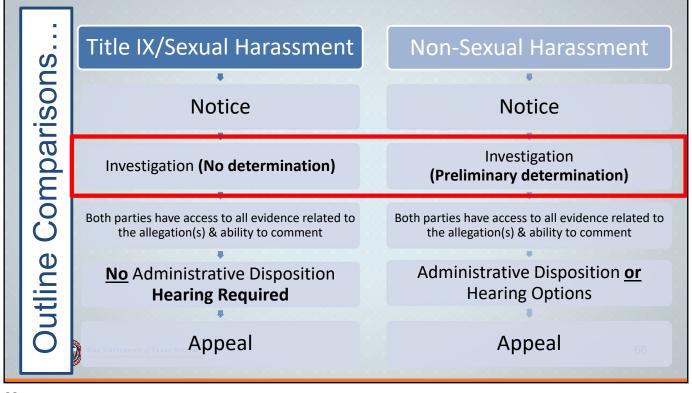


Statement Gaps or Ambiguities Revisited 62				
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Ambiguous Responses	Kind ofI thinkSort ofI believe	To the best of my knowledgeI may haveMaybe	Clarification or recall prompt	
Broad Statements	Always	Everyone	Clarification prompt; specific examples?	
Hearsay	I heard from Person X that		Clarification prompt; personal knowledge or first-hand experience?	









Completed Investigation Report: **Sexual Harassment Cases**

- Outline each of the allegations that potentially constitutes prohibited conduct under the Policy (required by the Title IX regulations).
- 2. Provide a **timeline** (e.g. procedural steps) of the investigation. (recommended)

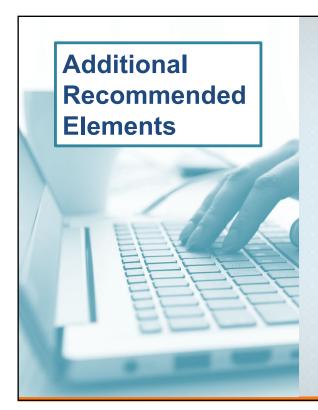


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Completed Investigation Report: **Sexual Harassment Cases**

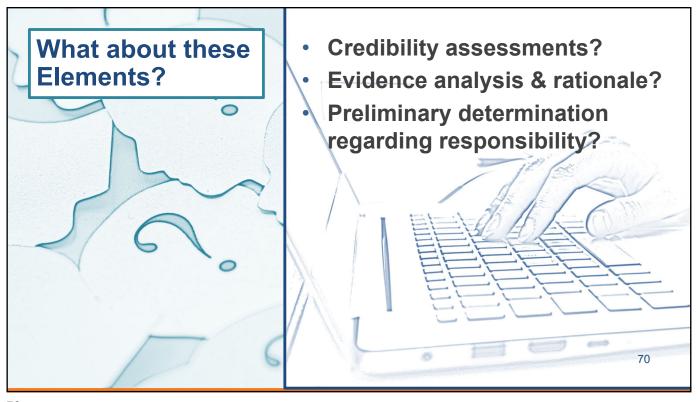
- 3. Fairly summarize <u>relevant evidence</u>, participate statements, and responses to questions (required by the Title IX regulations).
 - Exculpatory: Evidence tending to excuse, justify, or absolve the person of the alleged conduct.
 - Inculpatory: Evidence that places responsibility on the person of the alleged conduct.





- Overview (Summary) of the Investigation
- Institutional Jurisdiction
- Relevant Policies
- Investigators
- Witnesses
- Procedural Next Steps

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