



I Support Survivors

Educator Toolkit

*Created by: Grace Lim & Lydia Doerr
with the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County
for Ithaca City School District*

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Introduction

Dear Educators,

We are Grace Lim and Lydia Doerr, seniors at IHS and LACS. This summer we interned at the Advocacy Center of Tompkins County thanks to the United Way's Stephen E. Garner Summers of Service program. During our internship, we created the 'I Support Survivors Educator Toolkit' for high school faculty and staff to learn how to better support survivors of sexual and relationship violence, as well as how to stand against this violence within the school environment. Students need adults who support them and who are trying to combat sexual violence in schools because the problem is active and needs to be addressed.

The purpose of this toolkit is to:

1. Equip you with best practices for responding to student disclosures of sexual violence and/or harassment
2. Encourage and assist you in cultivating classroom environments that are survivor-friendly and combat cultures of sexual violence
3. Visually identify -through means of displayed signage- a network of supportive adults within a school community who are dedicated to survivors' wellbeing

We believe it's important for educators to know how to support survivors and how to demonstrate that support, not just with the included signage, but also with learned skills. While we hope to see these 'I Support Survivors' stickers throughout our schools, if you do not feel ready to display the sticker in your room or office, that is okay! We would rather you take the time to learn and put the sticker up once you feel prepared to offer support. As you read through the resources in this packet, we ask that you think about what you can do as an educator to help support your students and stand against sexual violence - both in your classroom, and in your everyday life.

We really appreciate your willingness to learn, and utilize this resource we've created!

Sincerely,

Grace Lim and Lydia Doerr

Handwritten signatures of Grace Lim and Lydia Doerr in blue ink.

Educator Guide

1 Basics Overview

What do we mean by "a survivor of sexual violence"?

A survivor of sexual violence is someone that has experienced any type of sexual violence including but not limited to: rape, sexual assault, sexual abuse, incest, in-person or online harassment (e.g. revenge porn), and/or stalking. Some people might not be comfortable labeling their experience or themselves as a survivor, which is entirely up to them! Others might be more comfortable using the word victim, depending on how they choose to relate to their experience.

**Important Note: Anyone can experience, or perpetrate sexual violence!*

Impacts of sexual violence

Sexual violence can deeply affect survivors in a multitude of ways, including but not limited to anxiety, depression, dissociation, poor sleep, and PTSD. Because of these effects, sexual violence can also have a negative impact on survivors as students, sometimes resulting in disinterest in classes, poor grades, skipping class and more.

What is harassment and what can it look like?

Sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcomed or unwanted behavior of a sexual nature, or harassment based on someone's gender and/or sexual orientation". It can look like: inappropriate touching and/or unwanted touching, comments about someone's body, gender, and/or sexual orientation, showing or sharing of sexual messages, sexual gestures, catcalling, sexist putdowns, and more.

If you would like to learn more information about sexual harassment please check out the included resource: "Sexual Harassment Is Never Okay" poster made by Grace Lim and Lydia Doerr.

What is Title IX?

Title IX is a federal civil rights law that requires your school to address sex-based harassment. Under federal Title IX regulations, schools are required to investigate reports of sexual harassment and assault. They are also able to respond in ways that can increase student safety and ability to participate in school activities.

The ICSD Title IX Coordinator is Lily Talcott and her information can be found on the included ICSD Resources for Sexual Harassment poster as well as the district website.

Educator Guide

2 How to Support Student Survivors

Believe survivors

One of the top reasons survivors don't share their upsetting and/or traumatic experiences is because they fear people will not believe them.

Don't blame survivors

Someone's clothes, relationship status, or demeanor never justifies sexual violence.

Be a bridge builder

Connect students to other supportive people and resources within the district (school counselors, administrators, the Title IX Coordinator). Be clear about school policies and what you can and can't do, including your role as a mandatory reporter (reference the Creating Safe & Affirming Spaces poster). Tell the student about resources and support they can access confidentially, such as Advocacy Center services.

Advocacy Center 24/7 hotline: 607-277-5000

Respect their process for healing and justice

The criminal justice system is not an option for all survivors. Please honor all avenues and journeys to healing.

Be supportive and understanding of student survivors and their needs

Sexual violence and dating abuse are difficult and traumatic experiences. Advocate for and accommodate student-survivor needs (such as giving them extensions and/or makeup opportunities on class assignments, allowing them to step outside the classroom if they feel triggered, and working with the Title IX coordinator on other accommodations and safety planning strategies).

Included resources: TALK article, Trauma and Teaching: Boundaries and Bridges article, Creating Safe & Affirming Spaces poster

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3 How to Cultivate a Safer Classroom Environment

Include content/trigger warnings

Use verbal and written notices before diving into content that may be more emotional and/or challenging, so that students can prepare themselves and consider how to engage or disengage for their own wellbeing.

Use teachable moments in the classroom

If the class is covering a book with abuse related (violent) content, take the opportunity to talk to your class about the issue and provide them with further resources. Invite Advocacy Center Education staff into your class, or ask for materials to distribute to students online or in your classroom.

Combat rape culture

Call out sexist, racist, homophobic, and transphobic language. Teach students about how to be active bystanders.

Support student-led efforts

Consider sponsoring and mentoring a student group against gender-based violence. Ask students how you can best support their efforts. Help spread the word about Title IX.

Included resources: Embrace Your Voice handout, Trauma & Teaching: Boundaries and Bridges article