
NAVIGATING SEXUAL HARASSMENT

volunteer programs



INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY

Content Warning

This guide discusses sensitive topics, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, cultural challenges, interpersonal boundaries, and systemic barriers to reporting. These topics may bring up difficult emotions, particularly for those with personal experiences related to harassment or trauma. Please know that it's okay to pause, step away, or seek support as you engage with this material. Your well-being comes first, and you are encouraged to approach this guide at your own pace and in a way that feels safe for you.

You are not alone, and support is available. Visit **equity.nd.edu** to find resources and assistance.

ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Every year, University of Notre Dame students participate in immersive educational experiences, often traveling to and working with historically marginalized and underrepresented communities. This guide is intended to empower student volunteers to recognize and understand the heightened risks of sexual harassment.

By raising awareness of the unique challenges presented by these experiences, this guide aims to foster accountability and build a culture of respect and safety that prevents sexual harassment from occurring and effectively responds if it does. Students will learn how to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, set boundaries, and advocate for themselves and others meaningfully.

Please direct all questions about the content of this guide to the Office of Institutional Equity at **equity@nd.edu** or **(574) 631-0444**.

IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM

Compared to their on-campus peers, student volunteers face increased risk of sexual harm. Several risk factors contribute to this trend, including:



Unfamiliarity with Reporting Systems. Uncertainty and lack of knowledge about how and where reports should be filed results in fewer students utilizing reporting mechanisms available to them. This gap in awareness can increase victimization by leaving individuals without clear pathways to seek help, access support, or hold perpetrators accountable.



Blurred Professional and Personal Boundaries. Volunteers could be participating in close, high-stakes environments where personal and professional boundaries may blur. This can complicate interpersonal dynamics and increase the potential for victimization.



Social Isolation. Being away from familiar support networks, such as family, friends, and home institutions, can lead to feelings of loneliness and uncertainty, which may hinder individuals' ability to access resources or report incidents when they occur. Isolation can increase victimization by making individuals more vulnerable to coercion, manipulation, or harm without the immediate support of trusted connections.



Engagement in New or Exploratory Behaviors. While volunteering, studying abroad, or navigating unfamiliar environments, students may be more inclined to experiment with substances, engage in unfamiliar sexual experiences, or explore new geographic areas. Among other risk factors, increased alcohol consumption is frequently cited as a contributing factor to sexual victimization and students often increase their alcohol use in countries where drinking laws are more lenient or where alcohol plays a significant cultural role, increasing vulnerability to sexual violence.



New or Heightened Power Dynamics. Volunteers often enter host communities as outsiders, perceived to possess greater economic, social, or educational power. This dynamic can result in the exploitation of trust or influence, leading to situations where harassment or violence becomes more likely.



Lack of Cultural Competency. Cultural norms and societal hierarchies in host communities are critical factors that increase the risk of victimization. In many countries, deeply entrenched gender roles and patriarchal values can normalize harassment and minimize the perceived severity of sexual violence. The impacts can be further exacerbated on those with intersectional identities (e.g., LGBTQIA2S+ students of color).

PROACTIVE PREVENTION MEASURES

The following strategies are designed to enhance protective factors and apply harm reduction principles, but it's essential to remember that a survivor's actions or inactions never determine responsibility for harm—it always lies solely with the perpetrator.

ENHANCE PROTECTIVE FACTORS.

1. **Understand Local Laws and Resources.** Familiarize yourself with the host community's legal protections, support networks, and reporting mechanisms before you arrive.
2. **Establish Clear Personal Boundaries.** Clearly communicate your boundaries with confidence and reinforce them in a way that prioritizes your comfort and well-being.
3. **Build Social Connections.** Establish a network of peers or trusted community members to strengthen your ability to navigate challenging situations.
4. **Be Mindful in Environments with Alcohol.** Stay aware of your surroundings when alcohol is present, as it can sometimes be used to exploit vulnerabilities. Note that exploitation is never the fault of the person being harmed.
5. **Research Cultural Competency and Interpersonal Skills.** Understand cultural differences and the intersections of gender, race, and socioeconomic factors to safely navigate environments and identify when cultural misunderstandings are being exploited.
6. **Prioritize Emotional and Mental Health Support.** Access mental health resources and establish self-care practices to address the emotionally taxing nature of volunteering in unfamiliar environments.

APPLY HARM REDUCTION STRATEGIES.

1. **Know Emergency Phrases.** Learn key local phrases (e.g., “I need help,” or “Call the police”).
2. **Utilize Program Contacts.** Keep your program coordinator’s contact information accessible.
3. **Establish a Check-In System.** Check-in regularly with friends or family. Let someone know your plans, location, and estimated return time. Consider using technology to share your location.
4. **Use a Buddy System.** Whenever possible, travel or attend events in pairs or groups to provide mutual support and ensure someone is available to help.
5. **Trust Your Instincts.** Your intuition is usually informed by cues about your environment.

UNDERSTAND HOW TO REPORT AND ACCESS RESOURCES.

HOW TO REPORT.

If you are subjected to, witness, or learn about sexual misconduct, you should report it immediately. Reports can be made to local law enforcement and/or the University. To directly notify the University, file a report at **speakup.nd.edu**.

You are also strongly encouraged to inform your program coordinator who will work with the University to ensure you have the support and resources you need.

What happens after a report is made? A staff member from the Office of Institutional Equity will reach out with information about support and available resources.

Questions? Contact OIE at **(574) 631-0444** or by email at **equity@nd.edu**.

AVAILABLE RESOURCES.

LOCAL

Medical and Emergency Services	Determine the location of local medical staff and how to seek services if needed. Ideally, find a hospital with a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). Also, be sure to know how to contact the police and crisis responders.
Specialized Support	Support organizations such as rape crisis centers, domestic violence shelters, and family justice centers provide specialized assistance for those experiencing sexual violence, domestic abuse, or interpersonal harm. Locate these organizations at RAINN.org (domestic) NOMORE.org (international).

COUNSELING

TimelyCare Telehealth timelycare.com/ notredame Confidential*	Available to students travelling within the United States or to US territories, services include access to 24/7 access to mental health counselors, non-emergency medical providers, and nutritional specialists.
GeoBlu geobluestudents.com Confidential*	Undergraduates abroad have GeoBlue, offering six free counseling sessions per issue per year. Graduate students with AETNA can access free virtual therapy through Talkspace or the Student Assistance Program, based on their plan. Both provide 24/7 counseling support.
RAINN.org (800) 656-4673 Confidential*	The Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN) is an anti-sexual violence organization that partners with local rape crisis centers across the country including the FJC. Access 24/7 support by calling the hotline or using the online chat function.
Care and Wellness Consultants Coleman-Morse supportandcare.nd.edu Non-Confidential	Care and Wellness Consultants (CWCs) are available to assist students in identifying strategies and resources to address academic, social, physical, mental, financial, or spiritual concerns. Schedule a virtual meeting with your CWC at supportandcare.nd.edu .

*Will honor confidentiality unless there is an imminent danger to the student or to others.

PASTORAL

Campus Ministry
ministry@nd.edu
(574) 631-7800

Confidential*

Staff who are not vowed
religious are considered non-
confidential resources.

On Campus

Staff in Campus Ministry are available to support students on campus and abroad. Schedule a time to meet with a staff member at **campusministry.nd.edu**.

Vowed religious (priests, deacons, and religious sisters and brothers) are confidential when operating in their role as staff members of Campus Ministry and will honor confidentiality unless there is an imminent danger to the student or to others. A disclosure during the Sacrament of Reconciliation (confession) will not be revealed by the priest for any reason, as it is a sacred obligation protected by law.

MEDICAL

**University Health
Services**
(574) 631-7497

Confidential*

On Campus

Upon your return to campus, UHS is available to students between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. While staff are unable to perform procedures related to the collection of evidence for the purposes of pursuing criminal prosecution, they can provide medical care including wound care, testing and treatment for sexually transmitted infections, and referral and transportation to a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner.

***Will honor confidentiality unless there is an imminent danger to the student or to others.**

INTERESTED IN LEARNING MORE?

VISIT OIE'S WEBSITE AT [EQUITY.ND.EDU](https://equity.nd.edu)



FOLLOW THE POET TEAM ON INSTAGRAM [@ND_POET](https://www.instagram.com/nd_poet)



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

INSTITUTIONAL EQUITY