

# Sexual Misconduct Informal Resolution Training

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## Agenda

1. Title IX Introduction
2. Party's Rights
3. Informal Resolution Process
4. Facilitation Approaches
5. Documentation & Record Keeping



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## Introduction



## Key Concepts & Framework



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## Title IX

Sex Discrimination  
Sexual Harassment  
Retaliation



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Institutions must reasonably respond in light of known circumstances...

1. Stop & prevent behavior from continuing or escalating

**2. Remedies:**  
**Supportive measures & resources**

3. Formal grievance process



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Distinctions...

## Sexual Harassment

Employee  
Quid Pro Quo

Severe  
Pervasive  
Obj. Offensive

Sexual Assault  
Dating Violence  
Domestic Violence  
Stalking

VS.

Non-Sexual Harassment  
Ex. Other Inappropriate Sexual Conduct



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## Definition of “Sexual Harassment” under Title IX

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

1. An **employee** 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);
2. Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be **so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive** 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 objective test to denote a hypothetical person who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct under similar circumstances 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<sup>8</sup>

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## “Education program or activity” under Title IX

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



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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 prohibited inappropriate or unprofessional sexual conduct.

Such conduct is:

1. **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 **severe or pervasive** that it created a Hostile Environment.
2. **Physical conduct** that is objectively offensive to a reasonable person and also so **severe or pervasive** that it created a Hostile Environment.



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Source:  
UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2022)

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## “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;
- Deliberate physical interference with or restriction of movement; or
- Consensual sexual conduct that is unprofessional and inappropriate, and created a Hostile Environment.



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Source:

*UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2022)*

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## Key Pillars: Title IX Process

Impartiality

Respect

Fairness

Equity

For all of the participants  
in the process:

*Complainants*

*Respondents*

*Witnesses*

*Third-party Reporters*



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## Serving Impartially in Your Role

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



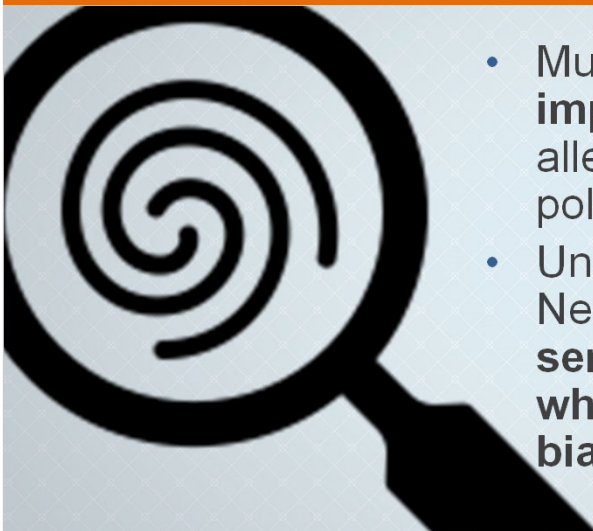
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Source: Title IX Regulations (2020)

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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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## Avoiding Bias

- Must **not** treat a party differently:
  - On the basis of the person's **sex**;
  - On **stereotypes** about how men or women behave with respect to sexual violence; and/or
  - On the basis of the person's **protected characteristics**.



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*Source: Title IX Preamble (2020)*

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## Party's Rights



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## Party's Rights

A **Complainant** and **Respondent** have the following rights during a grievance process:

### Information and Support

- To be informed of and have access to counseling, medical, academic, and other applicable **support services**, including **confidential resources**.
- To be informed of the importance of a victim going to a **hospital for treatment** and the **preservation of evidence**, if applicable, as soon as practicable after an alleged incident.
- To be informed of a **notice of formal complaint** to the University, whether filed by a CP or the TIXC.
- To receive information and ask questions about the **formal** and **informal processes**.

### Equal Opportunity and Representation

- To receive a **prompt, fair, equitable, and impartial grievance process**
- To be given **equal chance** to participate in a grievance process, including the opportunity to identify witnesses and other relevant evidence and to **choose not** to actively participate in the grievance process, if desired.
- To have an **advisor of choice** present during all meetings and grievance proceedings.
- To have an **advisor provided** for a party at a **hearing** under the Title IX/SH grievance process, if an advisor of choice is not present.
- To have access and equal opportunity to **inspect and review any evidence obtained** as part of the investigation, and to receive a copy of the completed investigation report.
- To be **equally informed** of any **determinations** regarding responsibility, dismissals of formal complaints, and/or a party's filing of an appeal.
- To **appeal** a determination regarding responsibility and/or dismissals of formal complaints.
- To file a report with **local** and/or **campus law enforcement** authorities.



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## Complainant's Rights (related to the Grievance Process)

- To **report** an incident and/or **file a formal complaint** with the University.
- To **request** in writing that the University **not investigate** a reported incident and be **informed** of the **University's decision** whether or not to investigate.
- To **request** in writing a **dismissal** of a formal complaint (e.g. withdraws the formal complaint or any allegations therein).



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# Informal Resolution Process

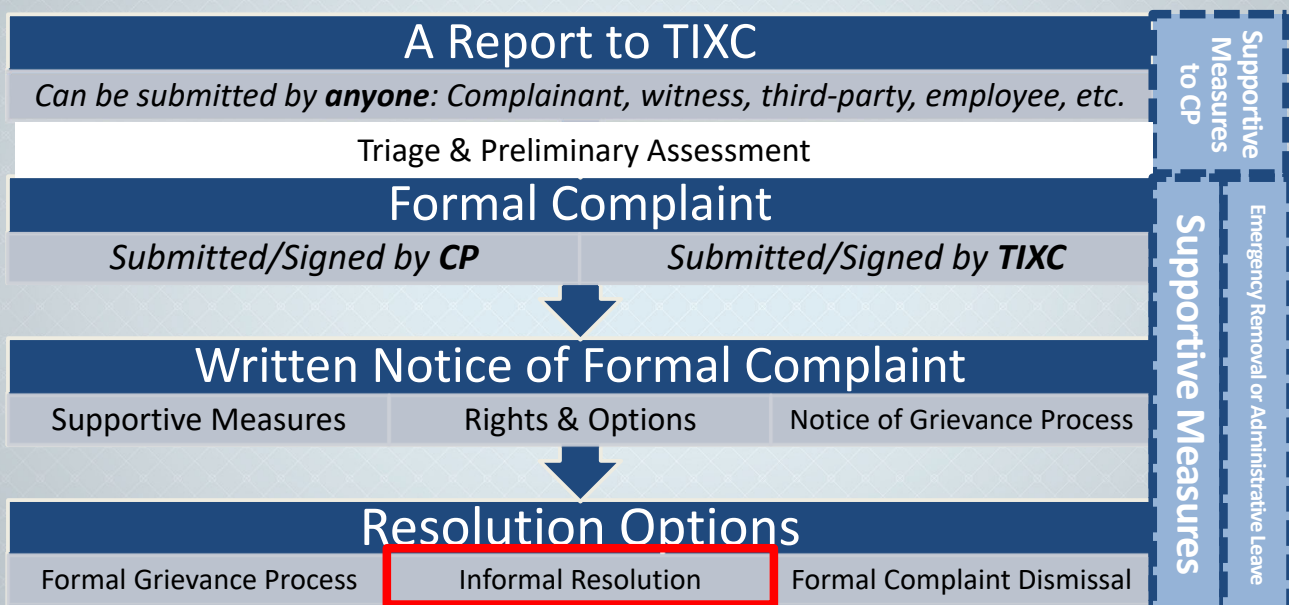


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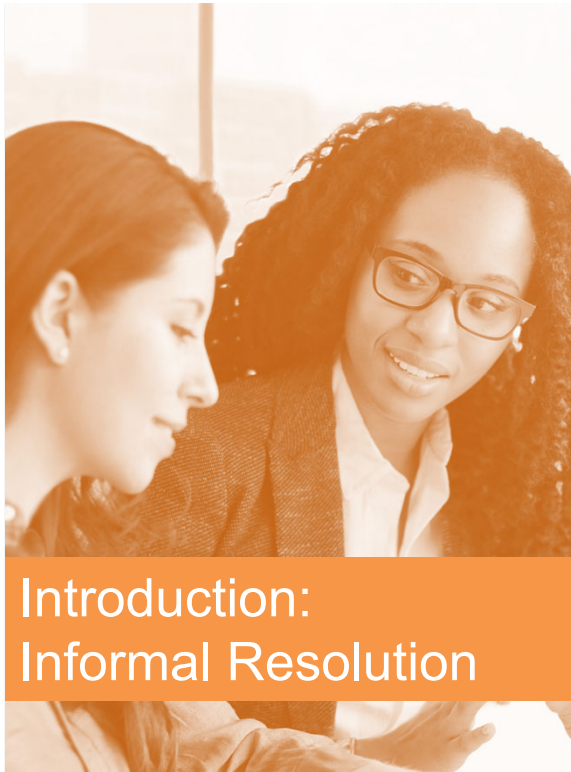
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## Resolution Flowchart



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## Introduction: Informal Resolution

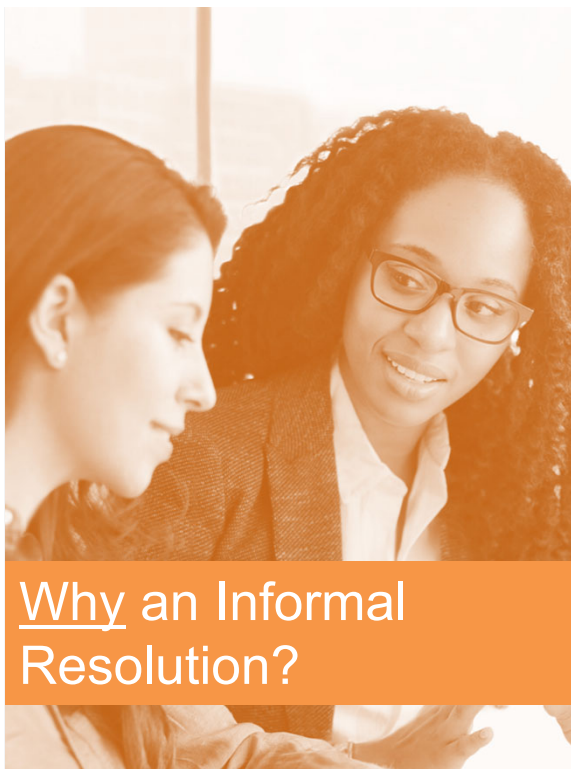
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### It's an alternative resolution option once a formal complaint is filed.

- **Voluntary agreement** made by both parties, if available.
- Available as an option at any time prior to reaching a determination regarding responsibility.
- Doesn't involve a full investigation & adjudication.
- May be facilitated through mediation (as an example).

**Note:** Each party has a right to **withdraw** from the informal resolution process and resume the formal grievance process at any point prior to an agreement.

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## Why an Informal Resolution?

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- Provides an **option** and **choice** for the parties to explore their own voluntary terms for a resolution.
- Opportunity to have a more **satisfactory experience** for the parties, rather than going through the formal grievance process.
- Opportunity to **remedy** and **repair harm** that was experienced through an **alternative method**.
- Ability to explore **non-punitive** and/or **learning-focused** resolutions, if desired.

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## Not Permitted When...

- Not permitted as a resolution option “under Title IX” when an **employee respondent** is alleged of “sexual harassment” by a **student complainant**.
- Examples of other non-applicable reasons\* due to seriousness and/or pattern of allegations:
  - Sexual Harassment cases
  - Sexual Violence cases
  - Dating or Domestic Violence cases
  - Stalking cases
  - The same respondent has previous informal resolution agreements

\* Check the institution's Sexual Misconduct Policy for specific provisions



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Source: Title IX Regulations (2020);  
UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2022)

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## What's left? “Other Inappropriate Sexual Conduct”

### 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;
- Deliberate physical interference with or restriction of movement; or
- Consensual sexual conduct that is unprofessional and inappropriate, and created a Hostile Environment.



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Source:  
UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2022)

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## Required Components

Once a formal complaint is filed...

**An Informal Resolution Process must include:**

- a) Written notice of allegations;
- b) Required elements of the informal process; and
- c) Any consequences resulting from participating in an informal process

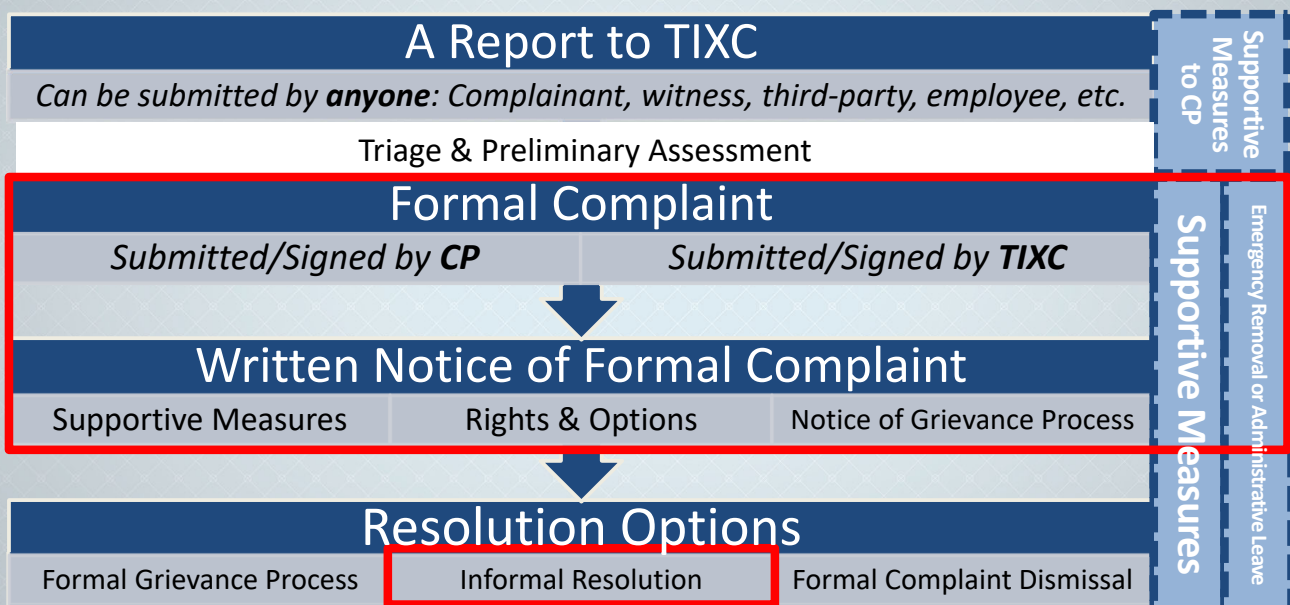


Source: Title IX Regulations (2020)

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## Resolution Flowchart



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## Written Notice of Allegations



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## Written Notice of Formal Complaint

Upon receipt of a formal complaint, promptly send written notice to CP & RP:

- Notice of the grievance process under the policy;
- Notice of the allegations that potentially constitute prohibited conduct under the policy, sufficient details about the alleged conduct: Date(s), time(s), and location(s);
- A statement that the potential policy violations are being investigated;

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## Written Notice (Continued)

- A statement that the RP is presumed not responsible for the alleged conduct and that the determination regarding responsibility will be made at the conclusion of the grievance process;
- Both parties may have an advisor of choice, who may be, but is not required to be, an attorney, and may inspect and review all evidence;
- A statement that the parties may review evidence gathered as part of the any investigation;

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## Written Notice (Continued)

- A provision of the policy that knowingly making false statements or knowingly submitting false information during the grievance process is prohibited and subject to disciplinary action;
- Any other relevant information for the written notice; and
- A statement that retaliation is prohibited under the policy. (recommended)

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Other **resources** to include with the written notice:

1. **Supportive measures** available for both parties
2. **Campus & local** resources or services
3. **Rights & options** of both parties
4. A copy of the **grievance process & policy**
5. Title IX Coordinator & Investigator(s) **contact information**



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## Elements of the IR Process



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## Informal Process Considerations

- Under the institution's policy, what is the IR **availability**? What conditions are permissible for an IR agreement?
- What are the **timeframe** parameters to complete an IR agreement?
- Who will **facilitate** IR's?
- What **acknowledgments** are required by both parties before an IR agreement?
- What are the **consequences** resulting from participating in an informal process?

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## Preparations

- Formal Complaint and process status?
- I.R. Pre-screening
  - Background information
  - CP: Supportive measures/remedies?
  - RP: Sense of willingness to address their alleged conduct through IR process?
  - Any potential conflicts between the parties?
  - Concerns raised (if any) from the parties?

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## Example Acknowledgments & Consequences of Participating in an IR Process

1. Acknowledgment of the **written notice** and allegations therein.
2. Received **rights and options** of both parties.
3. An IR agreement is a **voluntary** option, if available under the institution's policy.
4. Each party has the **right to withdraw** from the IR process and resume the formal grievance process...
5. IR **timeframe** (example: within 45 days of notice)
6. No recording will be made of the IR process...



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## Example Acknowledgments & Consequences of Participating in an IR Process (Cont.)

7. Any statements made during the IR process may not be used for or against either party... should the parties resume the formal grievance process.
8. The respondent will not be eligible for further IR agreements in the future.
9. An IR agreement will be based on individual needs, and based on specific facts and circumstances available.
10. Documentation & records provisions... 7 years retention...privacy and confidentiality of records...
11. **Terms of Enforcement:** Failure to comply with a provision or term in an IR agreement may result in disciplinary action.



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## Examples of Agreement Terms

Stop engaging in prohibited conduct defined in SHSM policy

Mutual No-Contact Btwn Parties

Apology Letter

Reflection Writing Assignment

SHSM Training or Workshop Assignment

Alcohol EDU Workshop

RP Housing Reassignment

RP Counseling Consultation

RP Course Adjustments

RP On-Campus Work Adjustments

RP Voluntary Leave from Uni

Enforcement Terms

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## Agreement Terms

Complainant

Institution

Respondent

Is the Institution satisfied with the I.R. Agreement Terms?



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## Compliance Monitoring



## IR Documentation Examples

- Documentation Checklists & Forms
- Intake & Initial Assessments
- Case Management Timelines
- Contact & Communications
- Notices & Letters
- IR Acknowledgements
- IR Agreements
- Obtain signatures for the IR Agreement
- Data Systems for Electronic & Hard Copy Records



# Facilitation Approaches



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## Exploration & Mediation Tools

- Rapport-building
- Active listening
- Indirect facilitation  
(e.g. shuttle-diplomacy)
- Restorative considerations?



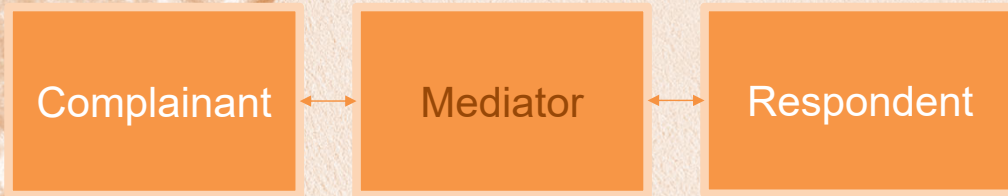
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## Indirect Facilitation (Shuttle-Diplomacy)

A mediator acts as a go-between and facilitates impartially the negotiation of proposed terms between the two parties. It doesn't require direct face-to-face interaction between the parties.



*Example model*

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## 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?”***
- ***“What, if anything, do you need right now?”***

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

- Facilitators: How can you minimize or eliminate these factors?



*Source:*

*Forensic Experimental Trauma Interview (FETI)*

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## General Starting Prompts

- *“I’ve read the formal complaint (and initial statements (if any)) and I am familiar with this case. **Is there anything important you wish to share at this time?**”*
- *“Tell me what you would like to **achieve** through this I.R. process.”*
- ***To CP:** “What types of **remedies** would you like to see in an I.R. agreement?”*
- ***To RP:** “What types of remedies, if any, are you **open** to? What components, if any, you are **willing to agree to?**”*



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## Active Listening Example Prompts

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Type	Example Prompts	
Validating	• “That sounds difficult.”	• “It’s <u>okay</u> to feel upset.”
Emotional Acknowledgements	• “You seem <u>disappointed</u> right now.”	• “Having to consider different options can be <u>stressful</u> to navigate.”
Reflecting	• “What I’m hearing is...”	• “Sounds like you are saying...”
Summarizing or Restating	• “Let me summarize to check my understanding [Repeat back]... Did I get that right?”	• “[Repeat/rephrase what the other person said]...Is this what you mean?”
Open-Ended Phrases	• “Tell me more about...” • “Explain/describe...”	• “What do you mean when you say...?” • “Help me understand...”
Affirmative Comm	• “Yes” • “I see.”	• “Go on.” • “Right.”

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## Informal Resolution Example Prompts

Purpose	Example Prompts
<b>Draw out ideas</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Tell me what <u>you</u> would like to <b>achieve</b> through this I.R. process.”</li> <li>• “What types of <b>remedies</b> would <u>you</u> like to see in an I.R. agreement?”</li> <li>• “How do <u>you</u> want to <b>approach</b> an IR agreement?”</li> <li>• “What types of remedies, if any, are <u>you</u> <b>open to</b>?”</li> <li>• What components, if any, <u>you</u> are <b>willing to agree to</b>?”</li> <li>• “What are terms or remedies that seem <b>fair</b> to <u>you</u>?”</li> <li>• “What do <u>you</u> think about ____?”</li> </ul>
<b>Be open to <u>all</u> <u>types</u> of responses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “How would <u>you</u> like to proceed?”</li> <li>• “What are some applicable <b>takeaways</b> that <u>you</u> can learn and grow from this experience?”</li> <li>• “The decision to accept or not accept certain terms or remedies is up to <u>you</u>.”</li> <li>• “What do <u>you</u> think might be <b>getting in the way</b> of coming to an agreement right now?”</li> </ul>



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## Prompts for Refocusing Conversations

Purpose	Example Prompts
<b>If the person <u>doesn't</u> <u>respond to the</u> <u>relevant prompts</u>...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Rephrase</u> the prompt again.</li> <li>• Acknowledge the shift: “It seems like the discussion is evolving to ____, but we started off exploring ____.”</li> </ul>
<b>If the person <u>makes</u> <u>an argument about</u> <u>a different topic</u>...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Acknowledge</u> the concern &amp; attempt to finish the <u>initial discussion</u> first: “I want to talk about that, but let's first finish addressing ____?”</li> </ul>
<b>If the person <u>attempts to change</u> <u>the subject</u>...</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It might be to <u>vent</u> or release some tension.</li> <li>• <u>Prompt</u> the person to discuss what's on their mind.</li> <li>• Then, use <u>active listening</u> to acknowledge the person's current <u>concerns, emotions, and/or needs</u>.</li> <li>• Try to <u>link</u> the person's concerns with the initial discussion topic.</li> </ul>



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## Restorative Considerations for the I.R. Process

- Addresses the conduct, impacts, and/or needs of the individuals
- Provides accountability & support
- Actively engages with the individuals
- Learning/educational component
- Opportunity for closure
- Ability to reintegrate the person back into the community

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## Informal Resolution Timeframe (Example)

Informal Resolutions of a formal complaint will be concluded within **45 days** of notice to the institution that both parties wish to proceed with the Informal Resolution process

**Note:** Circumstances may require a **temporary delay** in this timeframe & the institution may extend this timeframe for good cause.

- Provide **notice** to the parties for temporary delays or extensions



Source:  
UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)

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## Informal Resolution Documentation

Any final resolution pursuant to the Informal Resolution process will be documented and kept for seven years as required by law. However, no recording of the Informal Resolution process will be made and all statements made during the Informal Resolution process may not be used for or against either party (and the Hearing Officer and Appellate Officer may not consider any such statement made during Informal Resolution) should the parties resume the Grievance Process. Failure to comply with an Informal Resolution agreement may result in disciplinary action.



Source:

*UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)*

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## Documentation & Record Keeping

The University (through the appropriate office) will retain all of the documentation included in the Grievance Process (outlined in the SM Policy) for 7 years, in accordance with state and federal records laws and University policy.

All documentation of records are private and confidential to the extent possible under law. Student records of the Grievance Process are disciplinary records under FERPA. Employee records of the Grievance Process are subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Texas Public Information Act (TPIA), and included in the employee's official employment record.



Source:

*UT System Model Policy for Sexual Misconduct (2021)*

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## Q & A



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## Contact Information

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