

# Victim Advocacy Services

## What is a Victim Advocate?

A victim advocate is a person who is trained to support victims of crime. In addition to emotional support, advocates offer information and assistance in navigating the myriad of resources available, reporting options and systems. At UD, trained volunteer advocates serve on SOS' 24/7 helpline, and professional certified advocates at Student Wellness provide in-depth, ongoing services. Read about advocacy at the National Center for Victims of Crime: <http://victimsofcrime.org/help-for-crime-victims/get-help-bulletins-for-crime-victims/what-is-a-victim-advocate->



**S.O.S. 24/7 Advocacy** - Volunteer Advocates complete a mandatory 30 hour training program to serve on the Sexual Offense Support crisis service, and an additional 10 hours to be certified. The S.O.S. training program is a National Advocate Credentialing Program (NACP) approved training through the National Organization of Victim Assistance (NOVA). Calls are confidential, and as anonymous as the caller wishes. S.O.S. Advocates are a diverse group of undergraduate & graduate students, UD staff, and community members.

## An S.O.S. volunteer Victim Advocate can:

- Provide a listening ear, support, compassion, empathy.
- Explain medical, reporting, counseling, financial, legal, & safety options. Provide information about important things to consider and the various resources available.
- Answer questions for victims/survivors, their family & friends, UD staff, anyone assisting.
- Assist survivors in understanding what may have happened, assessing potential danger in a situation, and providing safety options.
- Accompany victims to the resources – especially to the hospital to explain what will happen, wait with victims, provide comfort to family or friends who are there, advocate to make sure that the victim's needs are met.
- Arrange a ride to the hospital via UD Public Safety and ride with the victim if preferred (police report does NOT have to be filed to use the ride service).
- Make referrals to counseling & ongoing advocacy resources both on and off campus
- Schedule an appointment with a professional advocate at Student Wellness.
- Make arrangements for the caller to utilize on-campus Emergency Housing or assist in seeking off-campus Shelter resources.
- Assist in making a Coping plan and/or safety plan to get through the next few days.

To reach an advocate, call the **UD Helpline 24/7/365** at **302-831-1001** and **press 1**. The clinician will make sure the caller is safe, take a 1<sup>st</sup> name and phone number, hang up, and have the advocate on duty call back directly within 10 minutes.

### Professional Certified Advocate/Counselor Staff at Student Wellness

Professional certified Advocate/Counselors at Student Wellness & Health Promotion hold Delaware and/or national certifications in victim advocacy. These services are confidential (though not anonymous). A professional advocate can:

- Provide ongoing crisis counseling and information about Survivor Support Groups at Student Wellness & Health Promotion and/or therapy groups at the Center for Counseling & Student Development, and provide referrals to off-campus counseling agencies.
- Explain medical, reporting, counseling, financial, legal, & safety options & things to consider.
- Explain the brain & body's responses to fear and trauma, the range of emotions survivors tend to experience, effective coping strategies; assist in developing a Coping Plan.
- Assess potential danger, provide safety options, and help develop a Safety Plan.
- Arrange academic accommodations, either directly with the victim's faculty or by working with the Office of the Dean of Students. (Examples: excusal from classes missed as a result of the incident, extension on deadlines, postponement of an exam, extra help, etc.)
- Arrange for on-campus Emergency Housing or provide info on off-campus shelters.
- Arrange a meeting & accompany survivors to meet with Housing & Residence Life staff when seeking a room change, contract termination, or other housing accommodations needed (as a result of victimization).
- Assist victim/survivors in understanding UD's sexual misconduct policy and/or relevant laws so that they can identify whether a violation may have occurred in their own situation.
- Accompany victims for an initial meeting with the Title IX Coordinator, and if they choose to move forward as a complainant, serve as their advocate throughout every step of the process (investigation, sanctioning, and/or appeal) and/or the criminal justice process if reporting to police. If considering engaging in the Sexual Misconduct process at UD, it is *recommended* that survivors utilize a professional advocate.
- Explain what to expect and help prepare for each step in the conduct process, while also providing emotional support throughout the process and the additional services listed.
- Explain the Protection From Abuse Order (PFA) and accompany victims to Family Court.
- Sign off on forms when seeking Victims Compensation Assistance Program funds through Delaware's program (VCAP is available to victims who have reported to police).
- Write a letter to the victim's landlord to verify need to terminate off-campus rental lease.

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To make an appointment with either professional, call **302-831-3457** during business hours (8:30am-4:30pm Monday through Friday).