

# Filing a Complaint on Campus After an Incident of Sexual Assault, Sexual Harassment, or Other Related Prohibited Conduct

In addition to seeking care and support for what has happened, you may be wondering whether you should report the incident to authorities. This summary briefly outlines some of the procedural issues you should know about filing a complaint against a current employee (faculty or staff) at Cornell University. The choice of whether or not you file a report (with either the University, local police, or both) is yours.

Cornell University will not tolerate sexual abuse, rape, sexual assault, sexual coercion, or other forms of sexual violence by or against students, staff, faculty, alumni or visitors as well as other related prohibited conduct under University Policy 6.4. If you have experienced an incident of sexual harassment, assault, or violence, or other prohibited conduct you have the option to file a formal complaint against staff or faculty through the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations (“WPLR”) pursuant to University Policy 6.4, or a criminal complaint with law enforcement.

**If your complaint is against a currently registered student,** contact the Title IX Coordinator at 607.255.2242.

## Frequently Asked Questions

- **Can I talk to someone without filing a complaint?** Yes. Resources are available to you for support, and it is entirely your decision whether or not you file a complaint. You may contact Cornell Health (medical and mental health providers; 607.255.5155) CURW (pastoral counseling; 607.255.6002), the Victim Advocates (607.255.1212; [victimadvocate@cornell.edu](mailto:victimadvocate@cornell.edu)), the director of the Women’s Resource Center (607.255.0015, [wrc@cornell.edu](mailto:wrc@cornell.edu)); the director of the LGBT Resource Center (607.255.4406); or the University Ombudsman (607.255.4321). You may also contact the Advocacy Center, a 24/7 community resource (607.277.5000).  
In order to keep you and others in the Cornell community safe, most Cornell faculty and staff (including RAs) have a duty to consult with the appropriate university officials if they become aware of potential incidents of prohibited conduct. All staff will maintain your privacy to the greatest extent possible.
- **Can this be resolved without a formal complaint?** Yes. Members of the Cornell community have an option to resolve concerns of sexual assault or harassment without a formal investigation through the Office of Workforce Policy and Labor Relations (WPLR). Staff members in this office work with the appropriate university officials to achieve a resolution under the applicable employee or academic policies/protocols. Depending on the nature of the complaint, this may include the grievance or discipline process, mediation, or training.  
**Note:** Once the matter has been resolved through this process, a formal investigation of the same incident may no longer be requested, and no appeal can be made if you change your mind about the outcome.
- **If I decide to file a formal complaint with the university against a current faculty or staff member, what should I do?** You may contact Laurie Johnston (Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Faculty and Staff; 607.255.6866; [lmj6@cornell.edu](mailto:lmj6@cornell.edu)) or Laurel Parker (607.254.7232; [lkp5@cornell.edu](mailto:lkp5@cornell.edu)) in WPLR. They can help you review your options under Policy 6.4, including informal resolution or formal investigation, and discuss with you any need for interim measures while the fact-finding investigation takes place. Interim measures may include changing office, work, or housing locations.
- **What does the formal complaint process require?** It requires a written complaint describing the alleged act or acts, the person or persons allegedly responsible (the “respondent”), and the date or approximate date on which the incident occurred. A complaint against faculty and staff, in most incidents, must be filed within six months of the incident. There are exceptions for incidents occurring between students and faculty in a supervisory relationship.  
**Note:** Complaints against alumni, visitors, or those not part of the Cornell community are not covered under this policy, but should be directed to CUPD, your supervisor or local human resources (HR) representative, or WPLR for appropriate university response.
- **I’m concerned about retaliation if I speak up.** Cornell University will not tolerate retaliation. All participants in an investigation are advised that retaliation against others involved in the process is prohibited. If you experience retaliation as a result of a report, please report it to WPLR.
- **Do I have to face the respondent (the person I believe is responsible for the incident) directly?** No. The complainant and respondent will be interviewed separately as part of the fact-finding interviews. However, it is possible that you may continue to see them on campus, in your office area, and/or in social settings. Pending resolution of the matter, the university may impose protective interim measures as appropriate, including: no contact orders, change in housing or place of employment, or employment schedule for you or the respondent, change of supervision, etc.



- **Can I bring my attorney?** Your attorney, or any advisor or support person of your choice, can attend the investigative interview with you, as well as any related meetings, and offer advice to you throughout the process, but cannot respond to questions asked to you nor pose questions to the investigator.
- **How confidential will the complaint be?** Only those who need to be involved will be contacted. WPLR, and, when a faculty member is involved, the faculty co-investigator, will underscore the importance of confidentiality with anyone involved in the process. The university will take reasonable measures to protect the testimony and records produced in the procedures under this policy. Note that confidentiality does not mean that the details of the complaint will be withheld from the respondent, and must be consistent with the requirements of Title IX when allegations under Title IX are concerned.
- **What are the possible outcomes of a formal complaint?** After a full fact-finding investigation, which are generally completed within 60 days, WPLR will determine whether there is sufficient evidence (a preponderance of evidence) that the respondent violated university policy (that is, whether or not prohibited conduct under policy 6.4 occurred). Recommendations will be made in a report that is forwarded to the appropriate university official (the Dean of the respondent's college or VP of the respondent's business unit) who determines the outcome based on the recommendations in the report. If the investigation determines that prohibited conduct likely occurred, there will be some form of remediation within the employment or educational context consistent with the severity of the incident. Both parties will receive copies of the report and will be allowed to provide comments to the Dean or VP before the outcome is finalized.
- **Can I appeal the outcome of the report?** If the investigation determines that the evidence cannot support your claim, or if you believe that the discipline or remedy is inadequate, you can appeal within 10 business days of the determination to:
  - (a) the vice president for human resources, or a designee, if the accused is a member of academic or nonacademic staff (other than faculty), or
  - (b) the provost, or a designee, if the accused is a member of the faculty
- **What if I decide I want to pursue a criminal complaint, in addition to or in place of a University complaint?** This is always an option whether or not you decide to file a complaint with the university. Both systems can be used. CUPD can assist you in notifying local law enforcement and provide information on pursuing criminal or other legal action. If you are considering pursuing a criminal complaint or a no contact order, it is important to report the incident to CUPD as quickly as possible in order to preserve evidence. Reporting the incident to CUPD does not commit you to pressing charges. Contact CUPD at 607.255.1111

## Resources

### Confidential Support

- Cornell Victim Advocates 607.255.1212; [victimadvocate@cornell.edu](mailto:victimadvocate@cornell.edu)
- Cornell Health (formerly Gannett Health Services) 607.255.5155 (24/7); [health.cornell.edu](http://health.cornell.edu)
- The Advocacy Center (24/7) 607.277.5000 (24/7community resource)

### Reporting Options

- Title IX Coordinator 607.255.2242; [titleix.cornell.edu](mailto:titleix.cornell.edu)
- Cornell Police (CUPD) 607.255.1111 (24/7); [cupolice.cornell.edu](http://cupolice.cornell.edu)
- Workforce Policy and Labor Relations (WPLR) 607.254.7232; [equalopportunity@cornell.edu](mailto:equalopportunity@cornell.edu)

### Additional Information

- Policy 6.4 [policy.cornell.edu/6.4](http://policy.cornell.edu/6.4)
- Sexual Harassment & Assault — Response & Education [SHARE.cornell.edu](http://SHARE.cornell.edu)
- Student Disability Services 607.254.4545; [sds.cornell.edu](http://sds.cornell.edu)
- International Students & Scholars Office (immigration resources) 607.255.5243; [isso.cornell.edu](http://isso.cornell.edu)
- Office of the University Ombudsman 607.255.4321; [ombudsman.cornell.edu](http://ombudsman.cornell.edu)
- NYS Bar Association Lawyer Referral & Information Service 800.342.3661