



## **Advocate & IVPS Peer Supporter FAQs**

- **Who are advocates and peer supporters, and how can they help?**
  - Advocates and peer supporters work with students who have been impacted by sexual violence, dating/domestic violence, stalking, and gender discrimination to provide private, emotional support and assistance. In addition, advocates and peer supporters work with students to access campus resources, such as counseling, medical care, emergency housing, financial support, and academic needs. They can explain reporting options for filing a formal report with law enforcement or the university, as well as the option not to report.
- **What does it mean that advocates and peer supporters are private?**
  - Advocates and peer supporters will not share any identifiable information with Title IX, the police, family members, or anyone else without the student's permission first. Exceptions may be made in cases where there is concern of imminent harm to the student, someone else, or the campus community.
- **What is the difference between advocates and peer supporters?**
  - Advocates are full-time staff members at the university, whereas peer supporters are trained student volunteers. Both advocates and peer supporters are available to provide emotional support, reporting options, and referrals to students at UT Austin. In addition to these services, advocates can also offer academic accommodations, emergency housing, financial support, and on-going support through the formal reporting process.
- **Can anyone come see an advocate or peer supporter for help?**
  - We can see any undergraduate or graduate UT Austin student, as well as alumni/ae and community members in special situations. We provide services for those impacted by interpersonal violence, including survivors, as well as their significant others such as friends, roommates, family members, and partners. We can also provide guidance and information for staff or faculty who are supporting a student.
- **If a student was impacted by interpersonal violence off-campus or before they enrolled at UT, can they meet with an advocate or peer supporter?**
  - Yes. Advocates and peer supporters are available to help any undergraduate or graduate student currently enrolled at UT, regardless of when or where the incident occurred.
- **Is talking to an advocate or peer supporter the same as filing a formal report?**
  - No. The advocate or peer supporter can explain reporting options – including the option not to report – but speaking with an advocate or peer supporter about options does not constitute filing an official report or complaint with the university. If a student is interested in making a report, the advocate or peer supporter can connect them with the appropriate office or show the student how to make a report online.



- **Can a student bring a friend with them to speak with an advocate or peer supporter?**
  - Yes. Students can bring a family member, or friend with them to their appointment. The advocate or peer supporter can explain issues related to privacy of information, even when other people are present.
- **Where are advocates and peer supporters located and what are your hours?**
  - UT Austin has two campus advocates – one located in Student Emergency Services in SSB 4.104 and the other in the Title IX Office at UTA. Advocates are available during normal business hours from 8:00am-5:00pm. The peer supporters are located in the Interpersonal Violence Peer Support program office on the ground floor of the Student Services Building in room G1.408. The hours that peer supporters are available varies each semester. Please visit our Advocacy and Support webpage for current hours.
- **How can someone contact an advocate or peer supporter?**
  - Advocates and peers supporters are both available via phone, email, and through our online appointment request form. Both advocates and peer supporters also accept walk-in appointments; however, depending on availability, students may have to wait or schedule for a future appointment.
- **What if an advocate or peer supporter is needed afterhours or on the weekend?**
  - UT Austin’s Counseling and Mental Health Center offers a confidential, 24/7 crisis line for students to call and receive immediate support: 512-471-2255. Students can also call our local crisis center, SAFE, which provides free, confidential advocacy for survivors of sexual assault and dating/domestic violence through their 24/7 crisis line: 512-267-7233. Students can follow up with an advocate or peer supporter the next business day for advocacy with campus matters.
- **Why were the advocate and peer supporter positions created?**
  - The advocate and Interpersonal Violence Peer Support programs were developed based on the CLASE recommendations, as well as through student advocacy and officially launched in the Fall 2017. These dedicated positions ensure that students impacted by interpersonal violence can connect with a staff member or peer whose sole responsibility is to support their needs.