Introduction to Fair, Thorough, and Trauma Informed Sexual Violence Investigations
St. Mary’s University

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November 2021
Chantelle Cleary Botticelli is a nationally-recognized subject-matter expert in Title IX and related fields. She has more than 15 years of experience in the investigation and adjudication of sexual and interpersonal violence. She lectures extensively at universities and conferences throughout the U.S. on Title IX, VAWA, harassment, and implementation of best and emerging practices. Prior to joining Grand River Solutions, Chantelle served as the Director for Institutional Equity and Title IX at Cornell University, and before that as the Assistant Vice President for Equity and Compliance and Title IX Coordinator at the University at Albany. In these roles, she provided direct, hands-on experience in the fields of Title IX, civil rights, employment law, and workplace and academic investigations. Her responsibilities included focusing on diversity efforts, sexual assault prevention and training, affirmative action, and protecting minors on campus.
Vision
We exist to help create safe and equitable work and educational environments.

Mission
Bring systemic change to how school districts and institutions of higher education address their Clery Act & Title IX obligations.

Core Values
- Responsive Partnership
- Innovation
- Accountability
- Transformation
- Integrity
Day Two Agenda

01. Evidence Collection and Assessment

02. Practice

03. The Investigative Report and Record
Quick Review!
Investigative Interviews: Continued
Follow Up Interviews

- Seek clarification
- Explore inconsistencies
- Explore contradictory evidence
- Explore difficult issues
- Opportunity to respond
Follow Up Interview Approach

1. Explain the purpose of the follow up.
2. Set the stage for the topics you will be covering.
3. Do not avoid asking the hard questions.
The “Hard” Questions

- Details about the sexual contact
- Seemingly inconsistent behaviors
- Inconsistent evidence/information
- What they were wearing
- Alcohol or drug consumption
- Probing into reports of lack of memory
How to Ask the Hard Questions

Lay a foundation for the questions:

- Explain why you are asking it
- Share the evidence that you are asking about, or that you are seeking a response to

Be deliberate and mindful in your questions:

- Can you tell me what you were thinking when....
- Help me understand what you were feeling when...
- Are you able to tell me more about...
"Casey and I have been friends for a few weeks. On Friday night, we were hanging out alone in my room, watching a movie. We started to make out, and I was ok with that. After making out for a while, Casey started touching me down there. Then Casey tried to have sex with me. Casey knew that I didn’t want to have sex but kept trying anyway. Casey was being really coercive, and so I just went along with it. Casey raped me and I want Casey to be held accountable."
Evidence Collection and Assessment
Evidence

“Something (including testimony, documents, tangible objects) that tends to prove or disprove the existence of an alleged fact; anything presented to the senses and offered to prove the existence or non-existence of a fact.”

Black’s Law Dictionary
Types of Evidence

Direct Evidence
• Evidence that is based on personal knowledge or observation and that, if true, proves a fact without inference or presumption.

Circumstantial Evidence
• Evidence based on inference and not on personal knowledge or observation.

Corroborating Evidence
• Evidence that differs from but strengthens or confirms what other evidence shows.
Evidence

- Testimony
- Text Messages
- Social Media Posts and messages
- Emails
- Surveillance
- Videos
- Photographs
- Police Body Camera Footage
- Swipe Records
- Medical Records
- Phone Records
- Audio Recordings
Evidence Collection

- Identify the items of evidence that you would like to obtain.
- Develop an intentional strategy for obtaining that evidence.
- Overcome barriers to evidence collection.
- Considerations about collecting certain types of evidence.
A Thorough Investigation

is more than evidence collection
Evaluating the Evidence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is it relevant?</td>
<td>Evidence is relevant if it has a tendency to make a material fact more or less likely to be true.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it authentic?</td>
<td>Is the item what it purports to be?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is it credible/reliable?</td>
<td>Is the evidence worthy of belief?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What weight, if any, should it be given?</td>
<td>Weight is determined by the finder of fact!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A Thorough Investigation Permits the Decision Maker to Assess

- Relevance
- Credibility
- Reliability
- Authenticity
- Weight
“Relevant” Evidence

The Department declines to define “relevant”, indicating that term “should be interpreted using [its] plain and ordinary meaning.”

See, e.g., Federal Rule of Evidence 401 Test for Relevant Evidence:

“Evidence is relevant if:
• (a) it has any tendency to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without the evidence; and
• (b) the fact is of consequence in determining the action.”
Evidence That is Not “Relevant”

“Questions and evidence about the complainant’s sexual predisposition or prior sexual behavior are not relevant, unless such questions and evidence about the complainant’s prior sexual behavior are offered to prove that someone other than the respondent committed the conduct alleged by the complainant, or if the questions and evidence concern specific incidents of the complainant’s prior sexual behavior with respect to the respondent and are offered to prove consent.”

“require, allow, rely upon, or otherwise use questions or evidence that constitute, or seek disclosure of, information protected under a legally recognized privilege, unless the person holding such privilege has waived the privilege.”

Physical and mental health records and attorney-client privileged communications would fit within scope of this prohibition.
Assessing Relevance
Why Does it Matter?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unsure about the relevance about a particular item of evidence? Ask the person who has proffered it.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Character Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Polygraph evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opinion Evidence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opinion Evidence

When might it be relevant?

How do you establish a foundation for opinion evidence so that the reliability of the opinion can be assessed?
You are investigating an allegation that Casey had sex with Taylor when Taylor was incapacitated. You interview several witnesses, one of whom made the following statement:

“I got to the party pretty late, and Taylor was already lit.”

“Taylor was wasted. Like totally messed up. There is no way they could have given permission for sex”
Assessing Authenticity

Investigating the products of the Investigation

Never assume that an item of evidence is authentic.

Ask questions, request proof.

Investigate the authenticity if necessary.
Is it authentic?

- Question the person who offered the evidence
- Request originals
- Obtain originals from the source
- Have others review and comment on authenticity
- Are there other records that would corroborate?
Assessing Credibility and Reliability

No formula exists, but consider the following:

- Opportunity to view
- Ability to recall
- Motive to fabricate
- Plausibility
- Consistency
- Character, background, experience, and training
- Coaching
- Bias
Barriers to Evidence Collection

- Non-Participating Parties
- Uncooperative Witnesses
- Uncooperative Advisors
- Identity of party or witness unknown
- Refusal to share materials
- Materials lost or no longer accessible
- Difficult topics
Barriers to Evidence Assessment

- Authenticity/Technology
- Colluding witnesses
- Colluding parties
- Totally different versions
The Notice of Allegations reads: "It is alleged that on or about January 1, 2020, Respondent engaged in dating violence in that he struck complainant, with whom he was in an intimate relationship, with a closed fist about her face and torso.

During your interview of Complainant she reports the following: Respondent and I began to argue about who I had been texting, he grabbed my phone, read it and then smashed it. He then jumped on me and started to hit me in the face, chest, and belly with his fists. He told me that I had to prove I loved him. I knew what that meant and so I gave him head. I didn’t want to, but I wanted the hitting to stop. I had no choice, it was either prove I loved him or beaten. I am so embarrassed. I have never told anyone about that part.

In your groups, conduct your after interview reflection.
"When I got to the party, I was already lit. I kept letting Marc get me drinks anyway. At some point, I just kinda don’t remember anything. And then I woke up in Marc's bed and it was morning. I had all my clothes on, but I know someone had sex with me. I could feel it. I just wanted to go, so I did. Before I left Marc woke up and tried to talk to me but I wasn’t hearing it. He looked guilty and I could tell he felt bad"
"Pat and I have been together for about a month and have been intimate for the last two weeks. We went out with my friends on Friday night and Pat got really drunk. At some point we ran into my ex and Pat was really jealous, so we left. When we got back to my place, I thought things were fine. We started hooking up and all of a sudden Pat's mood changed. Pat got really aggressive and choked me. He was so angry and I was so scared."
The Investigative Report and Record
At the conclusion of the investigation, we must create an investigative report that fairly summarizes relevant evidence.
Relevancy Standard

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relevant Evidence</th>
<th>Irrelevant Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • “Evidence is relevant if:  
  • (a) it has any tendency to make a fact more or less probable than it would be without the evidence; and  
  • (b) the fact is of consequence in determining the action.” | • Prior sexual history of complainant, with two exceptions  
• Legally recognized and unwaived privilege.  
• Records related to medical, psychiatric, psychological treatment |
Who Decides?

Department emphasizes repeatedly in Preamble that investigators have discretion to determine relevance:

- Subject to parties’ right to argue upon review of “directly related” evidence that certain information not included in investigative report is relevant and should be given more weight.

Investigators will have to balance discretionary decisions not to summarize certain evidence in report against:

- Each party’s right to argue their case, and
- Fact that decisions regarding responsibility will be made at hearing, not investigation stage.
Redactions
Additional Requirements

- Share the report with the parties and their advisors
- In electronic format or hard copy
- At least 10 days prior to the hearing
The Purpose of the Report

To allow for advance Review

To allow for advance Preparation
  • By the Decision Maker
  • By the Parties

Reduce likelihood of bias in final outcome
Intended Recipients

- The Parties
- The Advisors
- The Decision Maker
- The Appeal Panel
Essential Elements

- Intentionally organized to enhance comprehension
- Factually accurate
- Concise
- Without editorial or opinion
- Consistent format
The Record

- Compilation of the evidence
- Organized intentionally and consistently
- Divided into Appendices
- Is attached to the report
- Includes a procedural timeline
Examples of Appendices

**Appendix A:**
Witness testimony only (e.g., transcripts, statements summaries, etc.)

**Appendix B:**
Relevant documentary evidence (e.g., text messages, SANE reports, photographs, etc.)

**Appendix C:**
The remaining evidence deemed irrelevant, but directly related to the allegations in the formal complaint

**Appendix D:**
The procedural timeline
Structure of the Report

Overview of the Investigation
Statement of Jurisdiction
Identity of Investigators
Objective of the Investigation and the Investigation Report
Prohibited Conduct Alleged
Witnesses
Evidence Collected
Summary of Evidence
Conclusion
Report Structure
Overview

In this section, provide a very brief overview of the case. Include:

• the names of the parties,
• the applicable policy(ies),
• the prohibited conduct alleged,
• the date, time, and location of the conduct,
• a brief description of the alleged misconduct
Report Structure
Statement of Jurisdiction

1. Cite Jurisdictional Elements

2. State all grounds for Jurisdiction
Report Structure
Identify Investigators

1. Identify the investigators by name
2. State that they have been properly trained
3. List trainings, or cite documents in the record that detail investigators prior training
Report Structure

Objective of the Investigation & Report

1. This language should mirror the language in your policy or procedures.

2. State the objective of the investigation

3. Briefly state that all procedural steps were followed

4. Describe the purpose of the report.
Report Structure
Prohibited Conduct Alleged

1. List the allegations of prohibited conduct in the formal complaint.

2. Include definitions of prohibited conduct from institution’s policy/procedures.
Report Structure
List Witnesses

- List those witnesses that were interviewed
- List witnesses that were identified, but not interviewed

Simple List

Detailed List
## Example of a Detailed List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Witness Name</th>
<th>Witness identified by:</th>
<th>Information offered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Doe</td>
<td>Reporting Party</td>
<td>Mr. Doe is the Reporting Party's best friend. He was with the Reporting Party the night of the reported incident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane Doe</td>
<td>Investigators</td>
<td>Jane Doe is the Responding Party’s roommate. It is believed that she saw the Reporting Party leave the Responding Party’s residence immediately following the reported incident.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Report Structure
Evidence Collected

The final Title IX regulations require that all evidence obtained as part of the investigation that is directly related to the allegations in the formal complaint be shared with the parties and “made available at any hearing to give each party equal opportunity to refer to such evidence during the hearing including for the purposes of cross-examination.”

In this section, list the Evidence or Refer to Appendices
Report Structure
Summary of Evidence

In this section, include a summary of all relevant evidence. This section can be organized in several ways. It is important that, however organized, the evidence is summarized clearly and accurately, and without opinion or bias. In this section, the writer should cite the evidence and information in the Appendices.
Report Structure

Conclusion

In this section, summarize next steps in the process, including any procedural pre-requisites for moving the matter forward to a hearing.
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