

# Sutara Learning Foundation

Responding to Sexual Violence Toolkit



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# 1. Introduction

Sutara is committed to **preventing and responding** to sexual violence in a way that upholds **dignity, safety, and justice** for survivors. This toolkit provides **practical guidance** for staff, volunteers, and associated personnel on **supporting survivors, handling disclosures, and responding appropriately** to incidents of sexual violence.

A **survivor-centred approach** ensures that **the survivor's rights, needs, and well-being remain the top priority throughout** any response. It promotes **confidentiality, empowerment, non-judgmental support, and trauma-informed care**.

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## 2. Purpose of This Toolkit

This toolkit aims to:

- **Ensure all Sutara personnel** respond appropriately to disclosures of sexual violence.
  - **Provide clear guidance** on handling reports with sensitivity and professionalism.
  - **Support survivors** by prioritizing their safety, autonomy, and well-being.
  - **Ensure confidentiality and prevent re-traumatization** during response and reporting.
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## 3. Principles of a Survivor-Centred Approach

The **survivor-centred approach** is based on four key principles:

### 3.1. Safety & Protection

- Ensure **immediate physical and emotional safety** of the survivor.
- Take **all reports seriously** and act swiftly to protect the survivor from further harm.

### 3.2. Confidentiality

- Keep all disclosures and reports **strictly confidential**.
- Share information only **on a need-to-know basis** with consent from the survivor.

### 3.3. Respect & Dignity

- Treat survivors with **compassion and without judgment**.
- Use **supportive and non-blaming language** when speaking with survivors.

### 3.4. Survivor Autonomy & Informed Choice

- Survivors must be **in control of their decisions** at every stage.
- Provide **options, not instructions**, and respect the survivor's choices.



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## 4. Immediate Response: Handling a Disclosure of Sexual Violence

If someone **discloses sexual violence**, follow these steps:

### 4.1. Listen with Compassion

- Stay **calm and supportive**.
- Use phrases like:
  - *“I believe you.”*
  - *“I’m sorry this happened to you.”*
  - *“You are not alone, and I am here to help.”*

### 4.2. Ensure Immediate Safety

- Ask if the survivor **feels safe** or needs medical attention.
- If they are in immediate danger, assist them in getting to a **safe location**.

### 4.3. Respect Their Choices

- **Do not pressure them** to report or take action unless they choose to.
- Let them decide **what steps they want to take** next.

### 4.4. Maintain Confidentiality

- **Do not share details** of their disclosure with anyone **without their consent**.
- Only report to authorities **if required by law or requested by the survivor**.

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## 5. Support Services for Survivors

### 5.1. Medical Support

- Survivors may require **medical care, emergency contraception, STI treatment, or forensic examination**.
- If they agree, help them access a **trusted medical facility** or sexual assault crisis centre.

### 5.2. Psychological and Emotional Support

- Encourage access to **mental health services, crisis counseling, or peer support groups**.
- Provide **psychological first aid (PFA)**:

- Listen actively.
- Reassure them that what happened is **not their fault**.
- Encourage them to take things at their own pace.

### 5.3. Legal & Reporting Support

- Explain **legal options** without forcing them to take action.
  - If the survivor chooses to report, connect them with **legal aid or advocacy services**.
  - Support them through **any formal investigation** if they wish to proceed.
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## 6. Reporting and Investigation

### 6.1. Survivor's Choice to Report

- Reporting should be **survivor-led**, unless there is a legal obligation to report (e.g., cases involving minors).
- Survivors must be **fully informed of their options** before making a decision.

### 6.2. Sutara's Internal Reporting Process

1. Survivors or witnesses can **report incidents** through:
  - **Safeguarding Focal Points**
  - **HR Department:** hr@sutara.org (*hypothetical email*)
  - **Whistleblowing Channel:** whistleblowing@sutara.org (*hypothetical email*)
2. Reports will be handled with **strict confidentiality**.
3. An **impartial investigation** will be conducted **only if the survivor consents**.
4. The survivor will be **informed of all outcomes and next steps**.

### 6.3. Protection from Retaliation

- Sutara enforces a **zero-tolerance policy** on retaliation against survivors or whistleblowers.
  - Any **threats or intimidation** towards survivors will result in disciplinary action.
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## 7. Trauma-Informed Approach

A **trauma-informed approach** ensures that response efforts:

- ✓ **Recognize the impact of trauma** and avoid re-traumatization.
  - ✓ **Provide survivors with control** over their own decisions.
  - ✓ **Use respectful, non-judgmental language** at all times.
  - ✓ **Offer flexible, survivor-led support options**.
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## 8. Preventing Sexual Violence

### 8.1. Awareness and Training

- Sutara will conduct **mandatory safeguarding training** for all staff and volunteers.
- Training will cover:
  - Recognizing signs of sexual violence.
  - Survivor-centred response.
  - Reporting and prevention strategies.

### 8.2. Creating Safe Work Environments

- Implement **strict codes of conduct** to prevent abuse.
  - Ensure **safe reporting mechanisms** for survivors.
  - Promote **gender equality and power balance** in all Sutara programmes.
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## 9. Policy Enforcement and Accountability

- Sutara will **enforce consequences** for perpetrators of sexual violence, including:
    - **Employment termination**
    - **Legal action**
    - **Permanent banning from Sutara projects**
  - Sutara leadership is responsible for **ensuring compliance** with this toolkit.
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## 10. Tools

The following tools can be used to prevent, prepare for or respond to incidents of sexual violence

[Tool 1: Scenarios for senior leadership](#)

[Tool 2: Bystander intervention](#)

[Tool 3: Legal environment questionnaire](#)

[Tool 4: Sexual violence response task list](#)

[Tool 5: Guidelines for a survivor supporter](#)

[Tool 6: Preserving physical evidence](#)

[Tool 7: Conducting an investigation](#)

## 11. Review and Updates

- **Last Updated:** March 2024
- **Next Review Date:** February 2027
- **Policy Owner:** Global Safeguarding Lead

