

Keilim Policy Toolkit is an educational platform to provide resources to organizations. Keilim is not a legal document, and your organization needs to take into account all relevant federal, state, and local laws. Because laws vary by state and city, it is essential that you also work with an attorney to ensure that your protocols are legally compliant.

Organizational Response:

Receiving a Report

Tips for Receiving a Complaint

This handout provides some general guidance on how to respond to (“receive”) a complaint when someone raises concerns about the treatment or conduct of others in the workplace.

If you are asked a question and don’t know the answer, acknowledge the question, indicate that you don’t know the answer and that you will seek a response and get back to the person as soon as possible. It is important to maintain trust and to also be accurate about the process.

The one receiving the complaint should make sure to care for themselves and seek support following the interaction, especially if they find their own personal trauma history coming up.

Guidance	Sample Responses
Acknowledge that sharing any concerns is welcomed and the organization is grateful for the person’s trust.	Thank you for sharing this concern with me. I appreciate that you have trusted me with this matter.
Provide the time and space for a person to share their situation or narrative. Do not push or rush someone. Offer a break if it may be helpful.	We’ll take whatever time you need to make sure you have the opportunity to tell me about what’s going on.
Let people share their experiences in their own words.	I am here to listen to you. Tell me what brought you here today. Why don’t you tell me what’s going on? Tell me what is on your mind.

<p>Be present. Demonstrate concern. Take the complaint seriously.</p> <p>It is recommended to listen first and take more notes when you start to ask clarifying questions. This is not an investigation, so documenting facts on paper is less important than demonstrating understanding and confirming feelings.</p>	<p>I will be taking a few notes, but mainly I will be listening.</p>
<p>Check in for understanding.</p> <p>People feel most heard when you can reflect back the emotions they conveyed.</p>	<p>I want to check in with you to make sure I fully understand. You said X, Y, and Z happened. Did I capture that correctly?</p> <p>I hear a lot of (sadness, anger, fear) in what you shared.</p>
<p>Use open-ended questions.</p> <p>Do not drill down to specific details if they are not offered. If there is an investigation, those questions will be part of fact finding.</p>	<p>If you can recall, when and where did this take place?</p> <p>What else is important for me to know? -or- Is there anything else you would like to share with me?</p>
<p>Avoid appearing judgmental or questioning motives.</p> <p>Do not write your opinion about the character of any person named in the complaint or statements as to whether you believe the basis of the report.</p> <p>Avoid statements that validate events that have not been investigated.</p> <p>Do not attempt to conduct a fact-finding investigation.</p>	<p>Do NOT ask or say any of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Why do you think this happened? -or- What was your part in this? ● Did you tell them to stop? Why didn't you immediately tell someone? ● Why is this coming up now? ● Are you sure they weren't just kidding? -or- Perhaps you misunderstood. ● Why do you think this behavior is a problem? ● What resolution are you looking for? ● I believe you. -or- I'm sorry this happened to you. ● I have a tough time believing this. ● There are not enough details to do anything with this.
<p>Ask about safety.</p>	<p>What does safely returning to work or continuing to participate in our programming/attend services look like for you?</p>

<p>Have a list of resources available through the organization or in the community if someone desires additional support.</p> <p>If someone does not feel safe, identify what is creating perceived fear or risk. If there is fear of harm by another person, there is likely a need for fact finding and interim actions. Quickly speak with someone who can address immediate safety concerns.</p> <p>If the fear or risk is more about future possibilities, work-related issues, or other relationships, direct the person to resources for problem solving.</p>	
<p>Discuss next steps. Provide an overview of your organization’s process.</p> <p>Do not overpromise.</p> <p>Do not imply that a “false complaint” could result in problems.</p>	<p>Thank you again for sharing this information with me. All concerns are taken seriously.</p> <p>Here is some information (pamphlet/policy) that provides an overview of our process. The next step will be...</p> <p>If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. Here is my contact information.</p> <p>I’d like to check in with you _____ (tomorrow/at the end of the week/next week) to see how you are doing. Would that be alright?</p>

Always:

- Thank you (be gracious)
- I appreciate your trusting me with this (recognize they took a risk)
- We take these things seriously (the organization cares)
- If what you describe is happening, it will be stopped (set the action expectation)
- If appropriate, name emotions (I hear and understand)
- Do you feel safe returning to work? (safety)

Never

- Why are you just bringing this forward now? (Don’t question motive or timing)
- Are you sure that’s what happened? (Don’t express disbelief or doubt)

- Maybe they were just kidding. (Don't debate)
- What was your part in it? (Useless question and lays blame)
- Why do you think they did that? (Avoid using "why questions.)
- Have you told them to stop? (Avoid yes or no questions or suggesting the onus is on them)

Confidentiality

- I can't promise confidentiality, but I'll do my best to keep things as private as possible.
- There are some things I can keep between you and me and many I can't, but if something is causing you problems, it probably won't go away on its own, so I hope you will let me help.