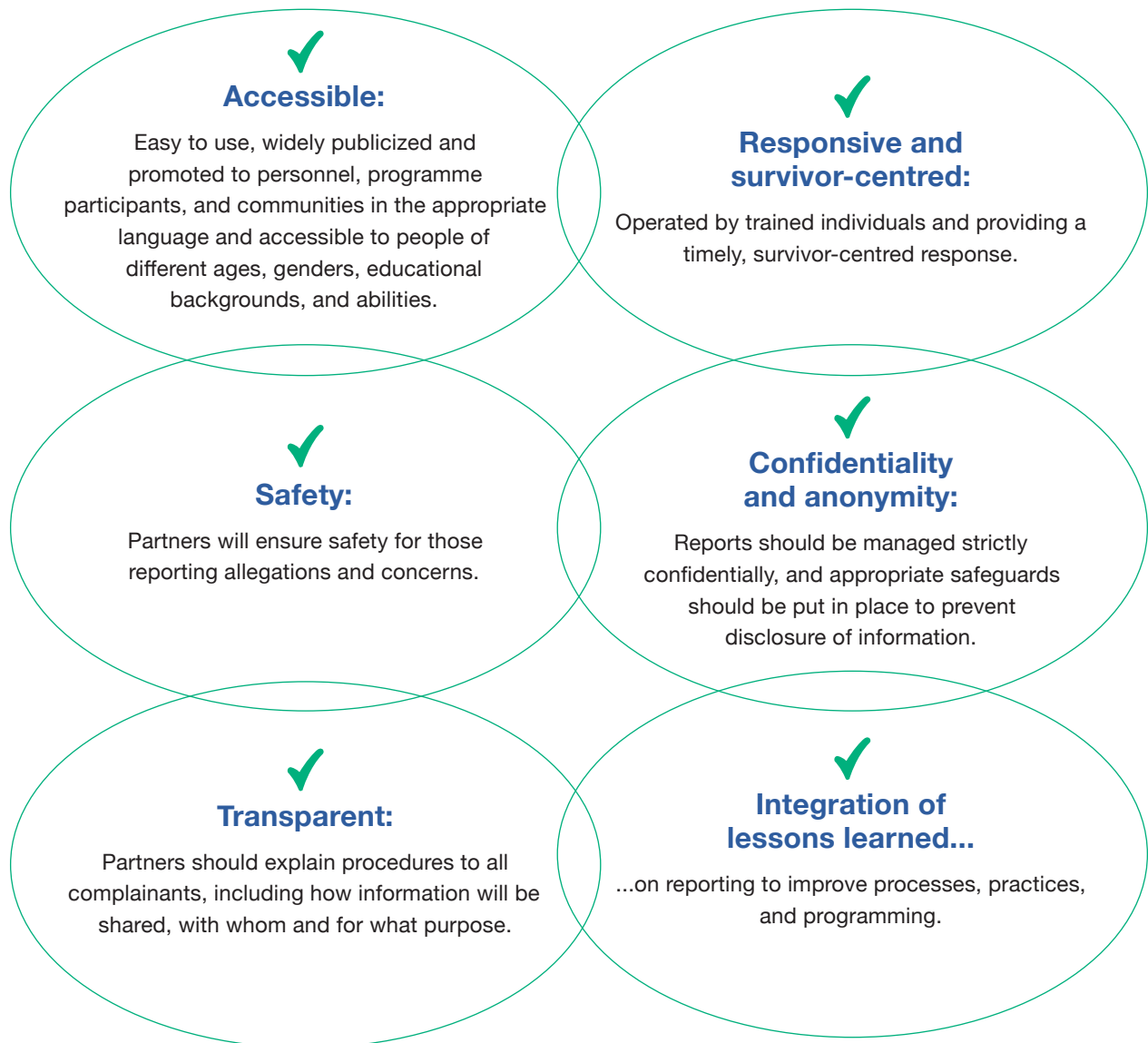


What are the **Characteristics** of an Effective Reporting Mechanism?

A complaints (or reporting) mechanism comprises simple procedures and mechanisms that give users access to safe means of voicing PSEAH complaints. It usually has two components, how someone can complain and the procedures of the organization on how complaints are followed up on.



1. [Operationalization of the UN Protocol on Allegations of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners and CHS Alliance: Guidelines for Investigations](#)
2. [CHS Alliance: Guidelines for Investigations](#)

What are the **Steps** to Setting up an Effective Reporting Mechanism?

Secure organizational commitment

- Coordinate with leadership to ensure appropriate resources and support are provided.
- Ensure management understand and is committed to the implementation of the mechanism.
- Work with survivors safely, if possible, to draft and review your policy and mechanisms.

Consult with the community

- About the design and location, etc., of the mechanism.
- It is best to use more than one mechanism to reach diverse groups in the community.

Design a process and assign roles

- Using information from the community—and bearing in mind the realistic financial and human resources available—develop a process.
- Consider how the mechanism will work, and who has oversight.
- If you are implementing through partners, you will have to determine how they will be involved. Will you make one together, or will they have their own mechanism?

Set up infrastructure and train staff

- There are different methods for mechanisms that programmes have used, for example, anonymous hotlines, community and organizational focal points, SMS.
- You will need to plan to train people regularly in your organization on including how your mechanism works and build capacity of staff who will receive reports.
- You should inform employees and staff about how the mechanism will work and who has responsibility for what.
- You should ensure the process is well-disseminated and explained, and accessible.

Raise community awareness on how they can make a complaint

- Provide information to the community on how to use the mechanism, its purpose, and limitations, how it works, and who is responsible.
- See more on this in at page 202 of *Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Toolkit for Local and National Organizations*.

Document lessons learned and monitor your mechanism

- Monitor and report on complaints to identify opportunities for improvement at the project, programme, and organizational level.

3. [Strengthening Partners in Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse: A Toolkit for Local and National Organizations](#) and [CHS Alliance: Guidelines for Investigations](#)

Roles and Responsibilities: Reporting

It is important to determine who will have key roles/responsibilities, which may be different depending on your organizational structure, size, sector and what your policy is targeting, for example if you are also addressing sexual violence against your own staff or not. Roles to consider include:

1. Accepting disclosures and reports

This could be human resources, focal points, gender equality monitoring team or advisors, senior managers familiar with the department, or even all staff can be trained, as some organizations have done to provide more avenues to report.

2. Supporting survivors

Certain people should be designated accountable for survivor support. Survivors should receive support however, whether their claim is substantiated.

3. Reporting requirements

Someone in senior leadership should be designated to ensure reporting to donors where mandatory, which could include one person to ensure reporting requirements of Global Affairs Canada are met, such as The Programme Director and another to ensure organizational and board reporting requirements are met, such as the Executive Director.

For smaller organizations, it is important to be mindful of ensuring independent people to report to. Often, in a small organization there may only be one person to report to – which can be a barrier. Where possible, when it comes to investigations, having other options of who to report to (for example, an external consultant for cases of PSEAH).

4. Investigations managers

This should be someone in a senior position, such as the senior manager. Where possible, these people are also those that are accountable for survivor support and keeping parties informed.

5. Investigators

Internal or external to the organization & trained and able to undertake an investigation.

6. Determining if a sexual violence report has been substantiated & what corrective action is appropriate

This should be someone in a senior position, such as a senior manager. When the result of an investigation substantiates the allegation(s), the Investigations Manager they may share the report with, for example, others in senior leadership and human resources only to decide upon an appropriate course of action together.

Responding to Disclosures: Do's and Don'ts

Typically, many survivors do not disclose PSEAH formally. A disclosure is an act of trust that needs to be reciprocated by acceptance of the survivors' account. Supporting a survivor must not be conditional on the validation of the account via other sources. The first step in supporting a survivor is to accept their story as truthful, and to proceed with the response below.



Do:

- Tell the survivor you believe them, that it was not their fault and ask how you can support.
- Listen empathetically, without interrupting or judging.
- Let them speak in their own words.
- Reassure the survivor that you will respect their privacy.
- Reinforce that the sole responsibility for the sexual violence lies with the perpetrator.
- Ask the survivor what they would like you to do and support and respect their choices.
- As much as possible, try to assess the survivor's situation to ensure they are safe and whether there is a risk they could be confronted by the (alleged) perpetrator.
- Advise them to seek medical help if they experienced sexual assault (keeping in mind it is their decision).
- Conduct all conversations in a safe, private setting, with same-gender translators if possible.
- Be clear about your role and the support and assistance you can provide, and never make promises that you cannot keep. Respect your limits.
- Consider accompanying the survivor to appointments if they request this.
- Inform the person of support resources available in the area and suggest they contact them.
- Consult the list of service and contact the designated Focal Point for necessary resources.



Do Not:

- Reinforce myths surrounding sexual violence. Common myths are:
 - *Many people are lying about their experience of sexual violence.*
 - *“Boys will be boys” (i.e., downplaying sexual violence).*
 - *Survivors are responsible or partly responsible for sexual violence.*
 - *Survivors provoke sexual violence through their attitude and behaviour.*
 - *Men cannot be victims of sexual violence.*
- Avoid inserting yourself into the survivor's experience or giving directions, such as:
 - *“If I, were you, I would ...”*
 - *“You must tell your family what happened...”*
 - *“You must prosecute this guy, if not, he'll do it again...”*
- Do not downplay or minimize the violence, for example “it was only one time” or “it was not that big a deal.”
- Blame the survivor. A person's physical appearance, dress and behaviour never justify the behaviour of a perpetrator and we cannot stop another person from becoming violent.
- Question the survivor's behaviour prior to the event of sexual violence.
- Do not ask the survivor if they are “sure”, nor express disbelief or disgust.
- Make excuses for the perpetrator or bring up support for their character.⁵
- Do not force the survivor to take actions they do not want to take.
- Do not call the police against the survivor's will.

4. [Survivor-Centred Care for Sexual Assault: IFC and DIGNA: Accompanying Survivors](#)

5. [Addressing Sexual Violence in Humanitarian Organisations](#)

Tips for Receiving Reports of SEAH⁶

Tell them that you are required to report this information and what comes next

When someone appears as if they might disclose an incident of SEAH, it is important to let them know what you are required to do with the information. It can be something like “If someone has hurt you, I would need to tell our organizational Focal Point, and report what the person has done so they can’t hurt anyone else.”⁷ Let them know what happens next. Be sure to pass along concerns about safety and confidentiality that the reporting person may have and tell them that you are sharing the concerns with the persons responsible for acting. If they express concerns that they don’t want their name shared, tell them that you can report it anonymously.

Don’t investigate or interview

You don’t have to ask a lot of questions but try to make note of the basics of the information that the reporter shares: who, what, when where. Remember, trauma can impact how people access their memories, and the reporter may be sharing details out of chronological order or without sharing all the details. When you know the reporter is telling a story that makes you suspect a violation of any policies on sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment, this is an indication to report it, even if the reporter doesn’t share all the “when and where.”

NEVER ask why

When the survivor is telling the story, you may be tempted to ask follow-up questions about “why” they

took certain actions or failed to do something. Keep in mind that judging is not your role. Your role is to just receive the information shared. Asking someone to explain actions or inactions (why?) can imply that you are judging their choices.

Ask about their concerns for personal safety.

Be sure to ask if they have concerns about their personal safety or if they need other support services. By raising this issue, you are recognizing their experience and fears in this process. You don’t need to interview or ask detailed questions, but only ensure that they feel safe and that you give them an opportunity to share what concerns they have for their safety.

Don’t make any promises

We can get wrapped up in trying to help people. Don’t make promises or guarantees that you can’t keep. You can’t guarantee a person will be fired. You can’t guarantee that they will be protected from any harm whatsoever. You can’t even guarantee that there will be an investigation, depending on what information is shared. Be open about your limitations and clear in describing who you will report this to and what information you will share.

Don’t try to be a counselor or provide support

Unless you are a trained counselor, it is also not your role to provide counseling, support or advise the

6. [From Interaction: Course Materials for Preventing Sexual Exploitation And Abuse, Module 1 PSEA Standards and Response](#)

7. [Adapted from Handbook for Coordinating Gender-based Violence Interventions in Emergencies, Gender-based Violence Area of Responsibility-GBV Sub Cluster/UNFPA \(2019\), pg. 38](#)

person what to do. Your role is to listen with empathy, note the facts of the report and any safety concerns, let the person know what comes next, and report through your organization's reporting mechanism. Do let the person know that they will be offered the opportunity to be connected to referrals for support services by the Focal Point in the organization, with the survivor's consent.

Be open-minded and willing to alter your beliefs

You may be receiving information about a colleague that directly conflicts with an opinion and belief you may have had about that colleague. At this stage, you don't know what is or isn't true: be open to the possibility of it being true and reporting it as required.

Recognize the importance of your position

Remember, that as a staff member, in whatever role, you hold some power. You have power to have this person's report considered and acted upon by the appropriate people in the organization. You have the

power to make them feel seen and heard. It is also important to use your position responsibly, and to ensure the report is escalated by you as required, so that it is followed up on and people held accountable for any policy violations through a fair process. Do not share the story with others, which could negatively affect the investigation process. Even when believing survivors, we need to adhere to a fair process towards anyone accused.

If you are not able to receive the report, connect the person with another way to report

There may be times, due to your own experiences of trauma, you may not feel in a position to receive a report of SEAH from an individual. Let the person know you want to help them, but you may not be the best person to do so at this time and help brainstorm other ways you can support them. For example, is there another colleague in the area who the reporter feels comfortable speaking with? Is there a reporting hotline that the person may feel comfortable with? Could you call your Focal Point to speak with the reporter directly? While you may not be able to take the report, you do have an obligation to help that person find the support and connection that they need to make the report.



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