

If It Happens

What to do in the first 24 hours if you are accused.

Student Edition

Memorize this sentence.

"I need to speak with my attorney before I answer any questions."

This is the only thing you say to campus police, Title IX staff, administrators, or anyone official. Then call your parents. That's it.

SECTION 1

The Moment You Are Contacted

If campus police, the Title IX office, an administrator, or anyone official contacts you:

| Who contacts you | What you say |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| Campus police | "I need to speak with my attorney before I answer any questions." |
| Title IX office | "I've been advised not to discuss this without my attorney present." |
| Your RA or an administrator | "I need to speak with my attorney before I answer any questions." |
| Your parents (when you call them) | "I need you to call me right now. Someone is accusing me of something and I haven't talked to anyone yet." |

After you say those words:

Do not text anyone involved.

Do not post anything on social media.

Do not try to explain, apologize, or resolve anything on your own.

Do not discuss the situation with friends.

Call your parents immediately — not after you hear more. Now.

SECTION 2

The First Hour

When you call your parents, they need specific information. Answer their questions calmly and accurately.

Tell them:

"Have I already talked to anyone?" — yes or no, and if yes, exactly what you said.

Whether campus police or local police are physically present.
Where you are and whether you are safe.

What happens next:

Your parents will contact an attorney.
Do not leave your room. Do not answer the door.
Do not respond to emails or texts from anyone involved.
Your parents will call you back with instructions from the attorney. Wait for that call.

If police are present when you call: tell your parents, then return to the officers and say: "I need to speak with my attorney before I answer any questions." Do not say anything else.

SECTION 3

First 24 Hours — What the Attorney Will Guide

Once your attorney is involved, they will direct your next steps. In the meantime, understand what is expected:

Make no statements to:

Title IX staff or investigators
Campus or local police
University administrators
Anyone connected to the other person

Do not:

Delete anything from your phone — texts, photos, location data, apps
Share screenshots or messages with anyone except your attorney
Contact the other person directly or through mutual friends
Post about the situation on any platform

Help your parents and attorney by documenting:

Your written account of events — for the attorney only, not shared with anyone else
Names of anyone who was present that night
Any Uber/Lyft receipts or location history from your phone
Any text messages or photos with timestamps

SECTION 4

If You Also Need Mental Health Support

Being accused is an acute stressor. You are allowed to struggle with it. Seek support from an off-campus therapist or counselor — not from university counseling services, as those staff members may be mandatory reporters under your school's policy.

Families Advocating for Campus Equality (FACE) maintains a support network and referral list for students and families navigating this process. Website: facecampusequality.org

SECTION 5

Common Mistakes to Avoid

| What feels right | Why it creates risk |
|---|--|
| "I'll just explain my side." | Families in our interviews consistently described early statements as their son's biggest liability, regardless of what those statements said. |
| "Asking for a lawyer makes me look guilty." | Requesting an attorney is a standard legal right. Investigators are trained to encourage students to talk without one. |
| "I'll text her and clear it up." | Any message you send after an accusation becomes evidence in both the Title IX process and a potential criminal case. |
| "I'll tell my friends what happened." | Friends can be interviewed. What you tell them can be used in the investigation. |

See the Essential Scripts & Protocols — Student Edition for night-of protocols, wingman guidelines, and the morning-after texting framework.