

## TIPS FOR NEWSROOM INTERNS

Students who are planning careers in journalism often seek internships in newsrooms, usually through university programs. Experts at the Freedom Forum Institute’s “Power to the Interns” training session on March 2, 2018, offered these tips for paid and unpaid interns to protect themselves from sexual harassment:

> **UNDERSTAND YOUR LEGAL RIGHTS.**

Ask your faculty supervisor to explain your rights under federal and state laws that prohibit sex discrimination in education programs and in the workplace.

> **ASK THE COLLEGE FOR TRAINING ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT.**

Before you are placed in a newsroom, ask the supervisor of the internship program for information on the types of behavior that are considered sexual misconduct. The training should include scenarios you could encounter in a newsroom setting as well as “active bystander” training, should you witness inappropriate behavior against someone else.

> **KNOW YOUR OPTIONS FOR RESPONDING TO ABUSE.**

Ask your employer or faculty supervisor to suggest ways to address harassing behavior, including examples of how to rebuff harassers. Ask the faculty supervisor if he or she will be available at any time to provide advice. Find out how the university program will handle reports of harassment.

> **KEEP A RECORD AND TELL A FRIEND.**

If an incident occurs, keep a contemporaneous written report in a journal (not on your workplace computer), and tell a friend or relative about the incident. Keep copies of any harassing texts, e-mails and notes. In the event of an investigation, management could use your records as evidence of abuse.

> **GET INFORMATION ON THE EMPLOYER’S HARASSMENT POLICY.**

Ask your faculty adviser whether the university has done its due diligence in scoping out the employer’s policy on sexual harassment. Be sure the school has received detailed information on how the employer’s internship program protects students from abusive behavior.

> **ASK THE EMPLOYER FOR INFORMATION ON POLICIES.**

During orientation with your employer, ask about policies on sexual harassment, including whether there is a point person or an employee group who could answer your questions about possibly inappropriate behavior. Check the employer’s procedures and policy regarding the reporting of harassment.

> **MEET AS MANY PEOPLE AS POSSIBLE.**

Ask the head of the internship program to introduce you and other interns to employees at all levels and all editorial departments. Look around for possible “allies” in the newsroom who could provide advice and support.

> **AVOID UNCOMFORTABLE SITUATIONS IF YOU CAN.**

Do not participate in sexual banter or jokes that are sexual. Recognize the potential risks of workplace romances, especially with those more powerful than you. If people in the newsroom invite you out to a restaurant or bar, be sure you are with a group, and leave if you are uncomfortable.