



Northeastern

NOTICE TO WITNESSES

You have been asked, either by the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution, the complaining party, or the accused student, to serve as a witness in a hearing before the Student Conduct Board. In order to help you better understand what will happen at a formal hearing, the following questions have been addressed:



Northeastern

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PREPARING FOR A STUDENT CONDUCT
BOARD HEARING



WHAT IS A STUDENT CONDUCT BOARD HEARING?

It is not a court of law, but rather a part of the University's internal system for handling alleged violations of the Code of Student Conduct (Code). The fact that allegations have been made and are taken seriously does not assume that they are true. The question being considered by this hearing body is whether or not there has been a violation of the Code.

WHAT IS A WITNESS?

A person who is asked by either party or the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution to provide information that is relevant to an incident being heard by the Student Conduct Board. You have been asked to be a witness because you can provide information that may not be available from any other source or because you can supplement information from a written report. Your participation is valuable to the people involved. As a witness you are not an advocate or helper for one side; your obligation is, simply, to tell the truth. Your statements will consist of: recalling events regarding the incident in question, answering questions from both parties, and answering questions from the Student Conduct Board.

WILL I HAVE TO "TAKE THE STAND"?

The hearing room is ordered with designated spots for various participants. The parties and the Board sit around a conference table, with witnesses to the side. After initial introductions, all witnesses will leave. You will wait outside the hearing room until it is your turn to provide information.

HOW LONG DOES A HEARING LAST?

On average, the hearings last a minimum of two hours, but there is no true prediction. For each witness called, anticipate that s/he will be in the hearing room for approximately 30 minutes. When the panel excuses you, you are then requested to stay in the waiting room until the end of the hearing in case the panel wishes to recall you for more information or clarification. Consider bringing work or something to read; if possible the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution will provide you with workspace. You may bring a snack or beverage as well. The Student Conduct Board thanks you in advance for your willingness to share your time.

WHAT IF I WANT TO ATTEND, BUT HAVE A CLASS OR ANOTHER COMMITMENT?

A formal hearing is a serious event, so every effort should be made to attend. Your presence at this hearing is essential in order for you to provide the Student Conduct Board with all pertinent information. If you have a time conflict, please call either the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution or the person requesting your presence. You may be able to make arrangements to come to the hearing late or leave early, or in some cases, submit a notarized statement. Please understand that formal hearings are difficult to schedule and the formal hearing will likely proceed whether or not you are present.

HOW SHOULD I PREPARE?

Most likely the person who has requested your presence will address this question with you prior to the hearing. Your responsibility will be to tell what you know in response to questions. You do not need to prepare any statements or memorize your account. You should, however, take some time to think carefully about the events you witnessed and about what you remember so that you can provide information clearly at the hearing.

SHOULD I BRING NOTES TO THE HEARING?

If you wrote an incident report, you will likely receive a copy during the hearing to look at, but you should not need to bring any notes with you.

WILL I HAVE TO FACE THE PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE HEARING?

During your time before the Board, you will be in the same room and at the same conference table except in special circumstances. If you have any questions or special concerns regarding your presence in the hearing room, please address them with the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution.

"A formal hearing is a serious event, so every effort should be made to attend."

WHAT IF I AM AFRAID THAT THE INFORMATION I PROVIDE WILL LEAD TO ACTS OF RETALIATION?

The University wants all witnesses to feel secure. Talk to the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution to discuss the options available to you. They may be able to work out a comfortable way for you to provide your statements to the Board. If any harassment does result from your participation, please inform the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution, so action can be taken.

CAN I BE CHARGED, IF IT IS REVEALED DURING THE HEARING THAT I ALSO VIOLATED THE CODE?

As a general rule, the University is concerned with the more serious charge in a case. Although it is possible, witnesses are not routinely charged by admitting to minor violations during hearings. If you are concerned, talk with the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution prior to the hearing.

WHAT IF I KNOW OF OTHER WITNESSES WHO SHOULD BE AT THE FORMAL HEARING?

If you know of other witnesses who have firsthand information about the incident, please notify the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution.

WILL I BE INFORMED ABOUT THE DECISION?

No. Student disciplinary records are confidential and are protected by institution policy and by law. Hearings are closed to the public. All individuals involved in a hearing (including witnesses) are told not to discuss the incident or people involved with anyone who is not directly involved with the case.

WHAT IF I HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Office of Student Conduct & Conflict Resolution at 617.373.4390.

Adapted from the University of Minnesota Campus Committee on Student Behavior, "Notice to Witnesses".

