Outline

- Why do trauma-informed websites matter?
- What does research say about what survivors need?
- How well do websites meet these needs?

Why do trauma-informed websites matter?

- Searching a university website is a form of disclosure
- Responses to disclosures influence healing (Ahrens et al., 2009; Borja et al., 2006; Dworkin et al., 2019; Orchowski & Gidycz 2015)
- Unsupportive university responses may exacerbate harm and be experienced as “institutional betrayal” (Smith and Freyd, 2013)

What does research say about what survivors need?

Agency: Options, enough clear information to make decisions, allowing survivors to enact a tailored plan (Brubaker & Mancini, 2017; Frazier et al., 2017; Holland et al., 2020a, 2020b; Kirkner et al., 2021; Munro-Kramer et al., 2017; Orchowski et al., 2013; Orchowski & Gidycz, 2015; Richards et al., 2021)

Confidentiality: Detailing who will know what, when (Banyard & Mayhew, 2009; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Krebs et al., 2011; Lindquist et al., 2016; Munro, 2014; Nasta et al., 2005; Porter, 2022; Sable et al., 2006; Walsh et al., 2010)

Validation: Help-seeking strategies that may not involve formal reporting (Ahrens, 2006; Holland & Cortina, 2017; Khan et al., 2018; Lorenz et al., 2018; Porter, 2022)

What do these needs suggest about website design?

Information should be:

- Accurate
- Easy to find
- Respectful
- Comprehensible – not legalese!
- Validating
- Not overwhelming
- Affirming of multiple options, and clear about their implications

How well do websites meet these needs?

- Nationally representative sample of 381 colleges and universities
    - 2017: Undergraduates search and code websites for information on sexual assault resources and reporting (entire sample)
    - 2022: Jared and Elizabeth search and code websites of a random subsample (n = 50)
- Iterative process of content analysis beginning with quantitative approach that moved to qualitative

“This website was a joke and the hardest to follow. There is no way I would be able to successfully understand how to report sexual misconduct if I was a student here. The website does not even mention responsible employees or confidential resources. How is a student to know who they can talk to?”

- Undergrad coder

Language often complex, confusing, legalistic, with terms not defined, or inconsistently defined

"Upon receipt of a report

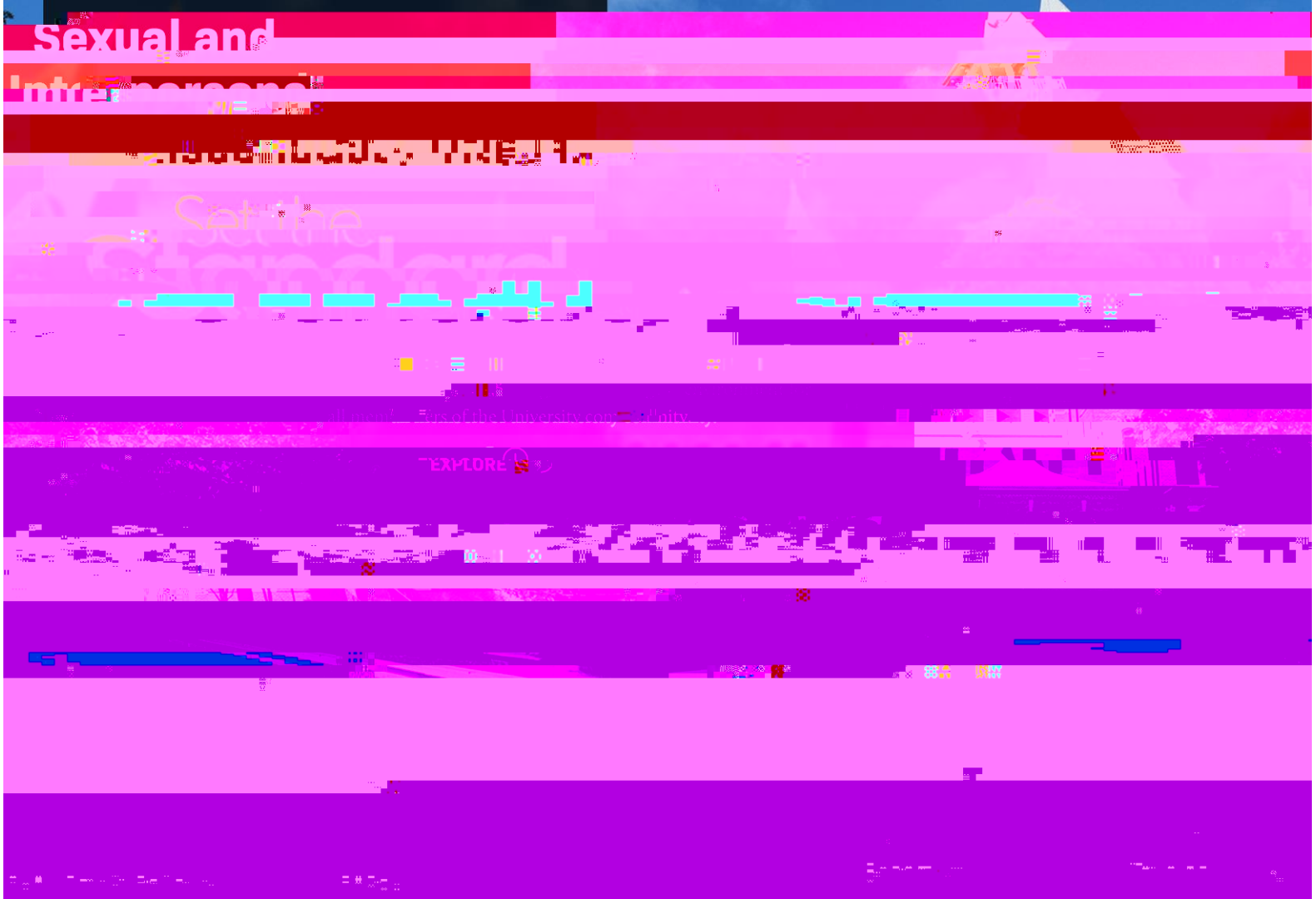
Reporting-First versus Survivor-First

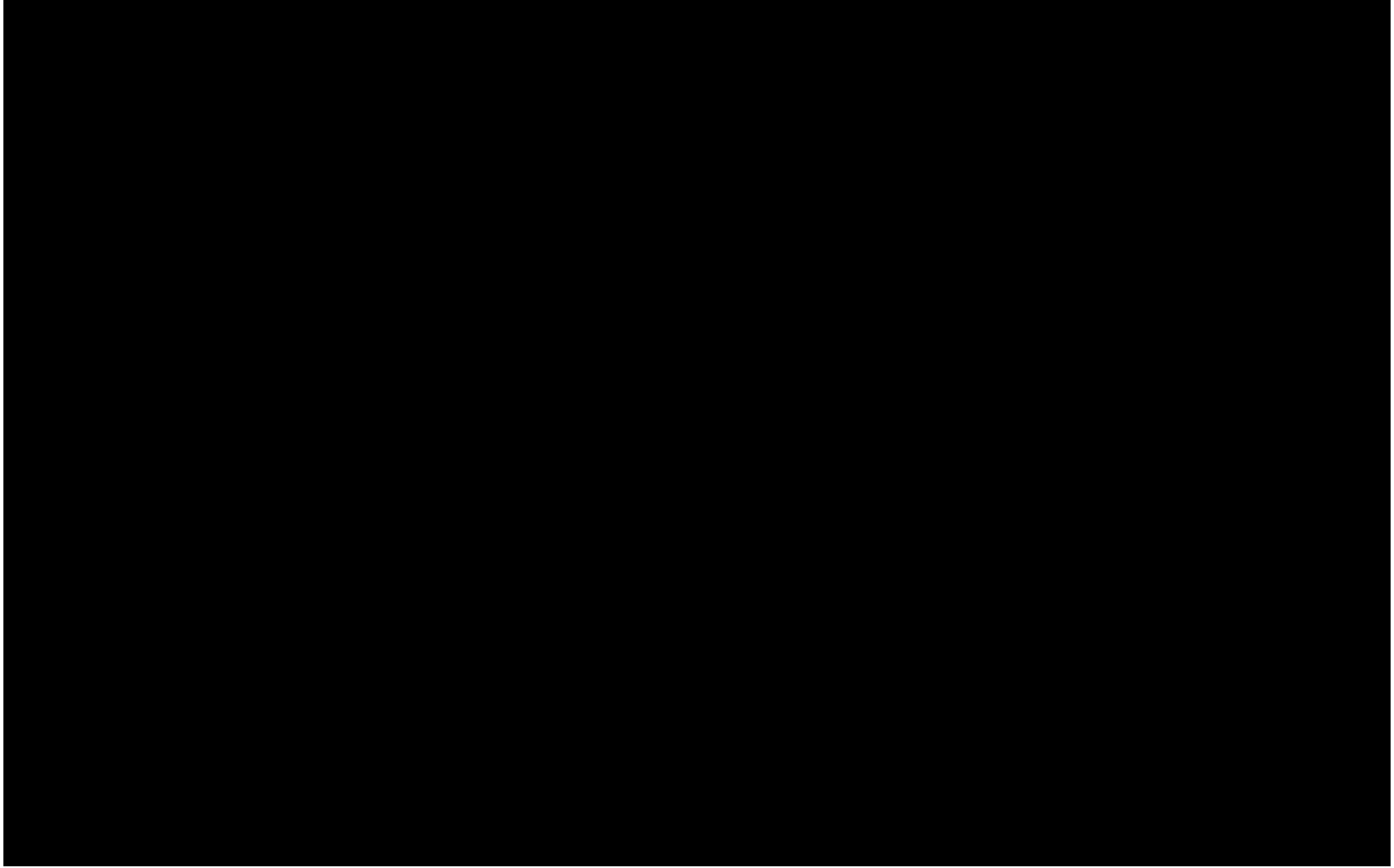
Reporting First

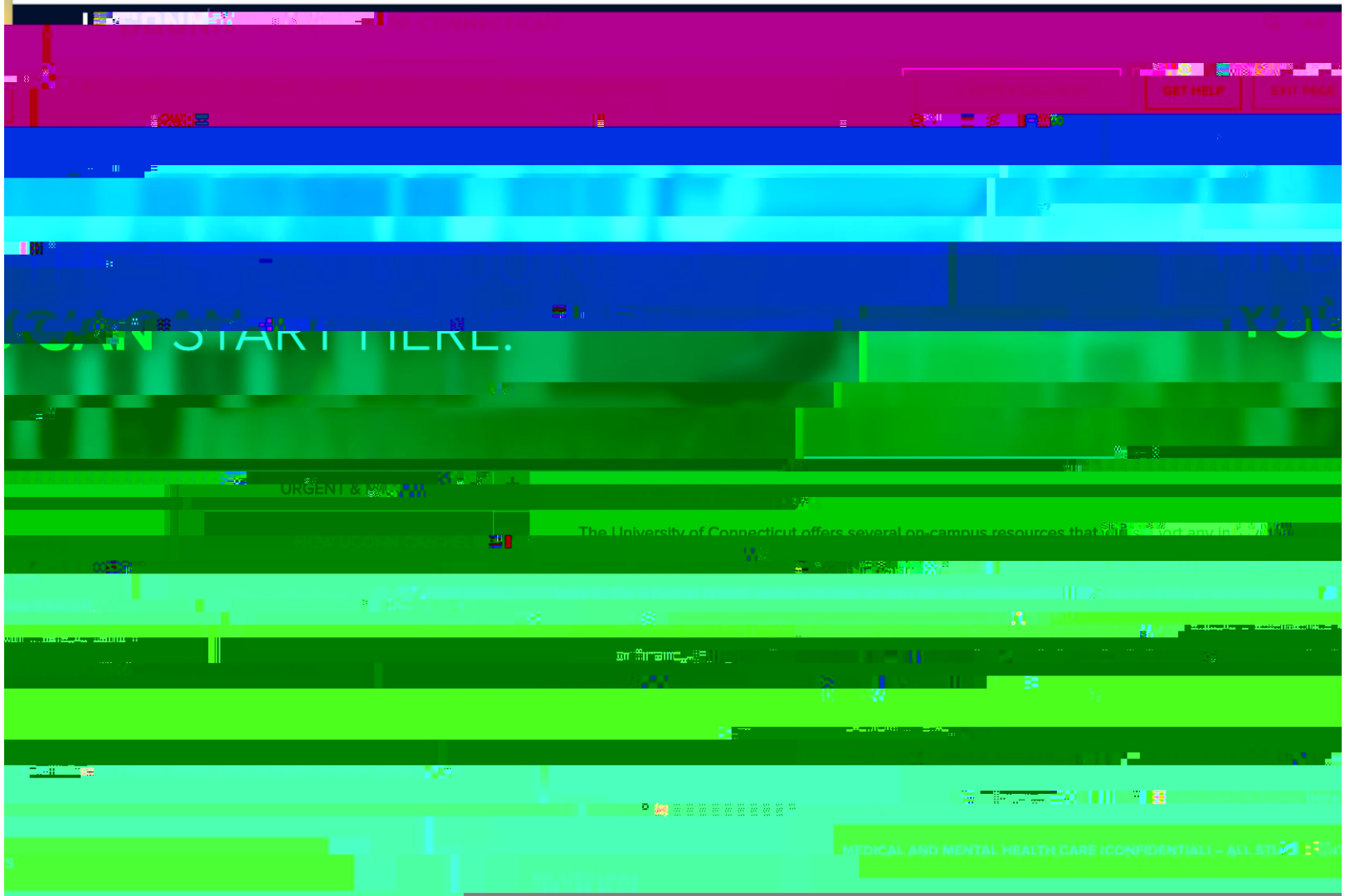
Funnels survivors toward the Title IX office and/or police

Survivor First

Leads with support, care, and confidential resources


Sexual and
Get the
EXPLORE




GET HELP
EXIT PAGE
CAN START HERE.
URGENT &
The University of Connecticut offers several on-campus resources that
MEDICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH CARE (CONFIDENTIAL) – ALL STU

Overall Assessment

- Few websites were designed to support survivor agency

Thank you!

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Obstacles to better websites?

- Legal complexity, lawyers, legal language, mandatory reporting obligations
- Websites often designed to achieve university interests:
  - Fulfilling legal requirements
  - Generating reports, over and above survivor need for agency

Obstacles to better websites?

- Website creators may not be aware of research on survivor needs or on trauma-informed design more generally
- Lack of resources / low priority
- Organizational complexity and difficulty coordinating across units