



INTERNATIONAL ANCHOR ALLIES

CONFIDENTIALITY GUIDELINES

NOVEMBER 1, 2025
GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY (GVSU)
International Students Services (ISS)

In summary:

All program participants are expected to treat the information shared in the program as privileged and should not be shared outside the program. All participants are expected to follow GVSU policies. These expectations are explained in detail in this document.

Purpose and Scope

The International Anchor Allies (iAA) peer support program is built on a foundation of trust, respect, and mutual support. These confidentiality guidelines are designed to protect the privacy of all participants - Captains, Navigators, Sailors and program staff - while fostering an environment where international students feel safe to share their experiences, challenges, and aspirations.

These guidelines apply to all participants in the International Anchor Allies program, including Captains, Navigators, Sailors, Graduate Assistant(s), program staff, and any staff member involved in program activities.

Core Principles of Confidentiality

Respect for Privacy

All participants have the right to privacy regarding personal information, experiences, and conversations shared within the peer support relationship. Captains, Navigators, and Sailors should respect each other's boundaries and honor the trust placed in them.

Need-to-Know Basis

Information shared within peer relationships should only be disclosed to program staff or other parties when there is a legitimate need or when required by law or university policy (see Section 4 on Mandatory Reporting).

Cultural Sensitivity

Recognize that international students may have different cultural expectations regarding privacy and confidentiality. Captains and naNavigators should be mindful of these differences and discuss confidentiality expectations early in the peer support relationship.

What Information is Confidential?

The following types of information shared within the relationship are considered confidential:

- Personal background, family information, and immigration status
- Academic challenges, grades, and educational concerns

- Financial difficulties or concerns
- Mental health and emotional well-being discussions
- Relationship issues and personal conflicts
- Cultural adjustment challenges
- Experiences of discrimination
- Career goals, concerns, and aspirations
- Any other personal information shared in confidence

Note: Contact information (email, phone) may be shared with program participants and staff for coordination purposes only. This information should not be shared outside of iAA.

Mandatory Reporting Exceptions

Confidentiality must be broken in the following circumstances to ensure safety and comply with legal and university obligations:

Imminent Danger

If a sailor or navigator expresses intent to harm themselves or others, the information must be immediately reported to:

- GVSU Counseling Center: (616) 331-3266
- University Police: (616) 331-3255
- Program Coordinator

In case of emergency, call 911 immediately.

Sexual Misconduct and Title IX

Disclosures of sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking must be reported to GVSU's Title IX Office:

- Title IX Office: (616) 331-9530
- Website: www.gvsu.edu/titleix

Note: Navigators should inform sailors about confidential resources available through the Center for Women and Gender Equity and the Counseling Center.

Violations of University Policy or Law

Serious violations of university policy or illegal activities may need to be reported to appropriate university authorities or law enforcement. When in doubt, consult with the program coordinator.

Captain and Navigator's Responsibilities

Establishing Confidentiality

- Discuss confidentiality expectations during your first meeting with your sailor. This should be documented in the IAA Peer Agreement Form to be signed TOGETHER by both parties in the peer support relationship.
- Explain both the protections and limitations of confidentiality, including mandatory reporting requirements.
- Create a safe space where your sailor feels comfortable sharing concerns.
- Revisit confidentiality discussions as needed throughout the program.

Maintaining Confidentiality

- Do not discuss your sailor's / navigator's personal information with other sailors/Navigators, friends, or family members.
- Avoid sharing identifiable stories or situations about your sailor/navigator on social media or in public settings.
- Store any written notes or communications securely and dispose of them properly.
- Have sensitive conversations in private settings where others cannot overhear.
- Use discretion when communicating via email, text, or social media.

When to Consult Program Staff

You may consult with the ISS graduate assistant (GA) or program coordinator or lead Navigators without breaching confidentiality in the following situations:

- You need guidance on how to support your sailor(s) (share general situations without identifying details).
- You're concerned about your sailor's safety or well-being.
- You're unsure whether a situation requires mandatory reporting.
- You're experiencing challenges in peer relationships.

Tip: When seeking guidance, you can share the nature of the concern without revealing your sailor's/navigator's identity (e.g., "I have a sailor who is struggling with...").

Sailor Responsibilities

- Understand that your navigator is committed to maintaining your privacy.
- Ask questions if you're unsure about what information will be kept confidential.
- Respect your navigator's privacy by not sharing personal information they may share with you.
- Be aware of mandatory reporting requirements that may necessitate disclosure.
- Communicate your comfort level regarding what you wish to share.

Note: If you need completely confidential support, consider reaching out to the GVSU Counseling Center or other confidential resources on campus.

Program-Level Confidentiality

Group Discussions and Training Sessions

During navigator training, group, or program mixers:

- Information shared by participants should not be disclosed outside the group.
- Use discretion when discussing case scenarios or experiences.
- Respect others' privacy and perspectives.
- Create a supportive environment where navigators and sailors can seek advice without fear of judgment.

Data and Record Keeping

- Program staff will maintain participant information in secure, password-protected systems.
- Personal information will only be used for program coordination and improvement purposes.
- Aggregate data may be used for program assessment and reporting without identifying individuals.
- Participants' information will not be shared with external parties without consent, except as required by law.

Program Evaluation and Feedback

Feedback provided through surveys, evaluations, or informal channels will be kept confidential. When feedback is shared with others for program improvement, it will be anonymized to protect participants' identities.

Captain Additional Responsibilities

Captains have additional responsibilities to ensure confidentiality within their Ships:

- Model confidentiality best practices in all interactions.
- Reinforce confidentiality guidelines during ship mixers.
- Create a safe space for navigators to discuss challenges without fear of judgment or disclosure.
- Keep information shared by ship members confidential unless mandatory reporting is required.
- Consult with program coordinators when situations arise that may require breaking confidentiality.

- Report concerns about confidentiality breaches to program staff.

Consequences of Confidentiality Breaches

Breaches of confidentiality can damage trust, harm relationships, and negatively impact participants' well-being. Depending on the severity and nature of the breach, consequences may include:

- Coaching and retraining confidentiality guidelines.
- Reassignment to a different sailor or pod.
- Removal from the lead mentor position.
- Removal from the iAnchor Allies program.
- Referral to university conduct processes if university policies are violated.

Confidential Resources on Campus

The following resources provide confidential support for students:

University Counseling Center

Phone: (616) 331-3266 | Location: 204 Student Services Building

Center for Women and Gender Equity

Phone: (616) 331-2748 | Location: 161C Kirkhof Center

Student Ombuds

Phone: (616) 331-2677 | Location: 260 Student Services Building

Office of Civil Rights & Title IX

Phone: (616) 331-9530 | Location: 4015 James H. Zumberge Hall

11. Acknowledgment and Agreement

By participating in the International Anchor Allies program, participants acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by these confidentiality guidelines. Questions or concerns about confidentiality should be directed to the program coordinator.

Program Contact Information:

International Anchor Allies Graduate Assistant / Program Coordinator

International Students Services (ISS)

Email: istudent@gvsu.edu | Phone: (616) 331-3898

Website: www.gvsu.edu/istudents/anchor-allies-141.htm