

Harassment and Discrimination Concerns at Cornell University: FAQ's and Resource List

See Policy 6.4 at http://www.policy.cornell.edu/vol6_4.cfm for details. Contacts for the resources mentioned in the FAQ's are listed following FAQ #12 with links to their websites. When in doubt contact the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality (255-3976 or equalopportunity@cornell.edu) to help you resolve your concern or refer you to the appropriate office.

1. I want to talk to someone about an incident that made me uncomfortable, but I'm not sure it's harassment or discrimination. What should I do?

- Find a trusted individual to hear your concerns. For example, a human resource representative ([HR](#)) or supervisor (for faculty/staff) and the Office of Workforce Diversity, Equity and Life Quality ([WDELO](#)), a [Harassment Advisor](#), [Bias Response Reporting Team Member](#), the [Ombudsman 's office](#), [CU Police](#) (for faculty/staff/students), or any individual contact on the bias and discrimination activity [resource list](#) are all safe places for you to go. They'll help you resolve your concern or refer you to the appropriate office.
- You can always seek confidential personal advice from [CAPS](#) (students) or [EAP](#) (staff).

2. What if I don't want anyone else to know what happened?

- In most cases, your concerns will be kept confidential. Only those who need to know will be informed. You will be given options and resources to aid you in resolving the situation.
- If, however, a crime has been committed, or someone is at risk of harm, there is an obligation to report the incident to the appropriate authority in order to keep you and others in the CU community safe.

3. I'm not ready to discuss this. Can I wait awhile?

- You decide when you are ready to discuss the incident or behavior that is making you uncomfortable.
- The sooner you raise your concern and address the situation, however, the easier it will be to resolve it. Note that if you decide to file a formal complaint, it must generally be filed within 6 months of the harassing or discriminatory behavior (longer time period for students complaining about their teachers, advisors, coaches may apply.)

4. Do I have to try to stop the behavior myself, first?

- If you are comfortable speaking to the individual whose behavior is offensive, by all means, do so. Many people don't realize that their jokes, comments or behavior is offensive and will stop and even apologize!

- If speaking to the individual doesn't stop the behavior, or if you don't feel safe approaching the individual (or group of individuals), then seek help from one of the offices set up to hear your concerns.
- In all events, document any incident right after it occurs.

5. How would my concerns be resolved?

- Concerns raised will be resolved through informal interventions, mediation, or as a result of a formal investigation. (Formal investigations will only take place as a result of your decision to file a formal complaint about what happened to you, unless the matter is especially egregious and raises institutional concerns.)

6. I'm concerned about retaliation if I speak up.

- Cornell University will not tolerate retaliation. Anyone involved in an investigation is warned against retaliation..
- If you raise a concern and experience retaliation as a result, please report it. The university response may involve sanctions, discipline, and other appropriate measures up to and including dismissal from the university.

7. Do I have to use the internal process, or can I file a complaint outside of the University?

- You may elect to have your complaint mediated or investigated internally or may elect to file a formal charge of discrimination with an external federal, state or local agency authorized by law to investigate such claims. These agencies include the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Tompkins County Human Rights Commission. You may also wish to seek the advice of your attorney.

8. Policy 6.4 prohibits "legally protected" status from harassment and discrimination. What if I'm feeling harassed, but not based on a "legally protected" status?

- You should raise any concern about behavior that makes you feel uncomfortable or harassed. Typically, you might raise such a concern with HR or your supervisor (faculty/staff) or residence hall staff (student) or Ombudsman (faculty/staff/student). Employee and Labor Relations and your bargaining unit representative are also resources for staff.

9. What if someone files a complaint about me? What do I do to defend myself?

- Cooperate fully with any investigation. If you wish, you may bring someone with you when you meet with the investigator to listen and help you understand the process. The individual you bring may not respond to questions for you, nor pose questions to the investigator. Do not engage in conversations about the complaint; honor the confidentiality of the process. Do not engage in behavior that could be construed as retaliation.

By raising a concern, someone may be bringing an issue to your attention that you were unaware of, and thus give you the opportunity to resolve it. Any complaint found to be false, malicious or frivolous will be dismissed and the person who filed the complaint may face sanctions.

11. What if I don't know who is responsible for the behavior? Or if the individual isn't a Cornell student, faculty or staff member?

- The behavior is still unwelcome and not tolerated in our community. The Bias Response Program is designed to handle incidents where the person responsible is not known or may not be a Cornell student, faculty or staff member. Contact any [Bias Response Reporting Team member](#) and learn about the program at:
<http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/resolveWork/biasDiscrimHarass/biasResponse/Program.html>

12. What records are kept of these complaints?

- WDELQ will keep records of all concerns and complaints brought to the office for three years, or until the conclusion of any external agency investigation or legal action, whichever is later. Records of investigations that find a complaint had merit will be kept indefinitely.

Who to contact:

All Concerned Individuals:

- WDELQ: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/contactHR/workLifeDiversity/index.html> (Alan Mittman, Darren Jackson, Laurel Parker)
- Resource List for Bias and Discrimination Activity: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/resolveWork/biasDiscrimHarass/biasResponse/ResourceList2007.pdf>
- Ombuds: <http://ombudsman.cornell.edu/> (Walter Lynn, Danilee Poppensiek, Linda Falkson)
- CUP: <http://www.cupolice.cornell.edu/>

Special Resources for Students:

- Judicial Administrator: http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/Admin/judicial_system.html
- Residential Advisor: <http://www.campuslife.cornell.edu/campuslife/resprog/raprogram.cfm>
- Dean: (See listing for each college at: <http://www.cornell.edu/administration/deans.cfm>)
- Dean of Students Office: http://www.dos.cornell.edu/dos/students_bridge.cfm
- Graduate School: <http://www.gradschool.cornell.edu/index.php?p=120>
- Your local DGS or Department Chair (see individual department websites for contact information)
- Bias Response Reporting Team Members: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/hr/hrmanage/diversity/reportingTeamMembers.html>

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- CAPS: <http://www.gannett.cornell.edu/CAPS/default.html>

Special Resources for Faculty and Staff

- Your department chair
- Dean of Faculty
- Your school or college dean (see listing for each college at: <http://www.cornell.edu/administration/deans.cfm>)
- HR: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/contactHR/hrAcrossCampus/hrConsultants.html>
- Harassment Advisors: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/hr/hrManage/diversity/harassAdvisor.html>
- Employee and Labor Relations: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/contactHR/laborRelations/index.html>
- EAP: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/benefits/eap/aboutemployeeasst.html>
- Bias Response Reporting Team Members: <http://www.ohr.cornell.edu/hr/hrmanage/diversity/reportingTeamMembers.html>