

Guidance on Civility and Violence

It is the policy of Northwestern University that all members of the University community, including faculty, staff and students, are expected to deal with each other with respect and consideration. When a community member's conduct varies from this standard, it is the responsibility of the manager, chair or dean who supervises the person engaged in the conduct to address it.

This policy covers a broad range of behavior, from rude or obnoxious behavior on one end of the spectrum, to threats of violence and violence on the other. The level of danger in the behavior determines the action that the supervisor should take.

Guidance on Handling Issues of Civility That Don't Involve Imminent Threats of Violence

Disagreement is common in professional relationships, particularly in an academic environment that encourages discussion and debate of ideas. In instances, disagreement is voiced in a respectful manner, and in such instances, no action by the supervisor is necessary. In other instances, disagreement that begins as a respectful exchange of ideas escalates into behavior that is disrespectful. Name-calling, raised voices and petty meanness are examples of this.

Any individual who believes he or she has been treated in a manner that is inconsistent with this policy should contact his or her supervisor. It is the responsibility of the supervisor, whether a manager, chair or dean, to work with the individuals involved in addressing the situation, so that all members of the community can work together in a professional way.

The manager, chair or dean is obligated to consult with administrative authority if the conduct escalates to the point where a member of the community reasonably believes that physical harm might occur. Examples could include behavior lacking rational control, such as angry outbursts; intimidating comments or verbal abuse.

Sometimes, a threat to safety may not be apparent at the first encounter but may be noticeable after repetition or increased severity. Repeated behavior that initially appears merely obnoxious may show a pattern in which danger to safety is perceived if the behavior continues.

When administrative authority is needed, an individual may contact:

- Department of Human Resources, for staff members
- Vice President for Student Affairs, for students
- Office of the Provost, for faculty

The administrative authority will:

- Provide guidance on University policies and procedures, intervention strategies, counseling and prevention.
- Brief the administration and University Relations as needed for informing the public and coordinating broad emergency response as appropriate.
- Initiate steps for disciplinary action, as appropriate.

Guidance on Issues Involving Imminent Threats of Violence.

When faced with a threat of violence or violence, individuals involved should immediately call for police assistance.

After police assistance has been sought, the individuals should notify the appropriate supervising or administrative authority. The administrative authority will:

- Call for additional emergency assistance if needed

