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# BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE AND SUPPORT



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The Bias Incident Response & Support (BIRS) policy is designed to supplement and work with campus units through connecting those who have experienced an act of bias (or those who have witnessed such an act) with appropriate support and resources

BIRS is not a disciplinary procedure and does not investigate, arbitrate, or replace other Furman procedures or services, nor does it override the responsibility or authority of any University office designated to address

complaints of alleged discrimination, harassment, hate crimes, or other bias incidents.

## *What is a Bias Incident?*

Bias incidents are acts or omissions, whether verbally, in writing, or otherwise, that harm, discriminate against, or demonstrate hate against a person or group based on facets of that person's or group's identity. Such facets of identity may include, but are not limited to race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender expression, gender identity, pregnancy, disability, age, religion, veteran status, or any other characteristic or status protected by applicable local, state, or federal law. Bias incidents are antithetical to the University's values and commitment to diversity and inclusion as described in the Furman University [Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

Examples of bias incidents may include:

- ◆ Use of dehumanizing, derogatory, or insulting language based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender or disability in person, in writing, on social media, and/or on whiteboards
- ◆ Culturally insensitive themed parties
- ◆ Using a racial, ethnic, or other slur in a joke or to identify someone

- ◆ Ridiculing a person's gender identity or expression as observed through behavior, clothing, hairstyle, voice, and/or body characteristics
- ◆ Imitating someone with a disability
- ◆ Language and imagery objectifying a person based on their identity

The list above is not exhaustive; rather, it provides examples of incidents that may constitute bias incidents.

Please be aware, however, that just because the expression of an idea or point of view may be offensive or inflammatory to some, it is not necessarily a bias-related incident. The University values freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas and, in particular, the expression of controversial ideas and differing views is a vital part of the University discourse. While this value of openness protects controversial ideas, it does not protect violations of the Student Conduct Code.

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act (the Clery Act) establishes federal guidelines to determine whether a bias incident reaches the threshold of a hate crime. **Hate crimes** are *criminal offenses* against a person or property motivated in whole or in part by a perpetrator's bias against the victim's actual or perceived (1) race, (2) religion, (3) disability, (4) sexual orientation, (5) ethnicity, (6) gender, (7) gender identity, or (8) national origin. Aggravating factors

such as time, place, and intent can affect whether a bias incident rises to the level of a hate crime.

All hate crimes are bias incidents, but not all bias incidents are hate crimes. The University acknowledges, however, that biased behavior can be hateful and inflicts harm to members of our community.

## *Who are the Members of the Bias Incident Response Team?*

The Bias Incident Response & Support (BIRS) Team oversees the BIRS policy, partners with campus resources to reduce the effects of bias incidents on the university community and works with University Communications to update the campus community, when appropriate. Furthermore, the BIRS team works with campus units and offices to coordinate the response to incidents that are likely to affect the campus climate.

The following University professionals serve on the BIRS Team: Assistant Dean of Student Conduct; Title IX & ADA/Section 504 Coordinator; Associate Vice President for Spiritual Life/University Chaplain; Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence; Associate Vice President for

Human Resources; Associate Dean & Director of Housing and Residence Life; Associate Dean & Director of the Center for Interpersonal Connections; and other members of the university community as appropriate.

The BIRS Team offers support to individuals navigating the process of reporting a bias incident. Examples of support offered by the BIRS team include:

- ◆ Assigning a member of the BIRS Team for initial follow-up support;
- ◆ Connecting faculty to their faculty ombudsperson; Connecting staff to their staff ombudsperson; Connecting students to counseling services, chaplaincy, or Student Success Advocates;
- ◆ Connecting students to appropriate university offices to pursue reasonable measures such as housing relocation and academic assistance;
- ◆ Advising students and employees on formal grievance options; and
- ◆ Other support efforts designed to ameliorate negative effects that complainant(s) may experience.

Sample responses offered by the BIRS policy include:

- ◆ Communicating with appropriate campus offices to initiate appropriate investigative and disciplinary processes for violations of University policy;

- ◆ Arranging mediation via appropriate campus or community offices (when appropriate);
- ◆ Working with University Communications to notify the campus of bias incidents (when appropriate);
- ◆ Supporting campus units in the facilitation of dialogues, awareness campaigns, and similar initiatives, across campus and/or in targeted populations;
- ◆ Tracking trends to develop interventions and preventative strategies; and Other measures designed to stop biased behavior and prevent reoccurrence.

Concurrent with the BIRS policy, the University may conduct investigations into violations of University policy using existing processes such as, but not limited to, the Sexual Misconduct Policy, the Student Disability Grievance Procedure, Student Conduct Procedures, or University Grievance procedures.

## *How can I report a bias incident?*

Preserving information is essential to the University's response to bias incidents. If you experience or witness a bias incident, please do the following to document it:

- ◆ If you see a written slur or discover words or symbols that are biased in

nature, do not erase it.

- ◆ If you have a camera or cell phone camera, take a photo of any evidence, such as physical injury, damaged property, or a license plate.
- ◆ If the incident is verbal, please write down exactly what was said to the best of your recollection. Ascertain/retain the contact information of any possible witnesses.

Students and employees who perceive that they have experienced a bias incident, as well as those who are witnesses to a bias incident, are encouraged to report it immediately by one of the following means:

1. Complete the [Online Report](#)
2. Complete an in-person report to:
  - ◆ Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence (faculty), [864-294-2029](tel:864-294-2029), Administration Building 200B
  - ◆ Human Resources (employees), [864-294-2217](tel:864-294-2217), 2600 Duncan Chapel Rd, Suite 200
  - ◆ Student Life (students), [864-294-2202](tel:864-294-2202), Suite 215 Trone Student Center
  - ◆ Furman Police (students or employees), [864-294-2111](tel:864-294-2111), Estridge Commons

3. Anonymously via:

- ◆ Furman's Campus Conduct Hotline, 866-943-5787
- ◆ Live Safe App available for iPhone or Android (choose Furman as School or Agency)

The University will address bias incidents reported anonymously based on the information provided, though an anonymous report may hinder the ability to respond effectively.

## *Are confidential resources available for sharing bias concerns?*

Students, staff, and faculty can utilize confidential university resources to discuss bias incidents and inquire about support. Confidential resources are not obligated to share information that is provided to them but will report aggregate statistics about such information. This allows individuals to explore their options in a non-pressured environment while they make informed decisions about how to manage a bias incident.

The following resources are available for confidential support.

- ◆ Trone Center for Mental Fitness (students only) – via phone at [\(864\) 294-3031](tel:864-294-3031) or in person on the lower level of Earle Student Health Center;
- ◆ Office of Spiritual Life (all students and employees) – via phone at [\(864\) 294-2133](tel:864-294-2133) or in person on the lower level of Daniel Chapel; or
- ◆ [University Ombudsperson](#) (all employees)

## *What Happens When A Bias Incident Report is Submitted?*

- ◆ The BIRS Team Coordinator or designee may engage promptly with the appropriate members of the BIRS Team for consultation in response to bias incidents. The BIRS Team will review all bias incident submissions to determine if they meet the University's definition of a bias incident.
- ◆ Individuals who report a bias incident will generally be contacted within one (1) to three (3) business days by a BIRS Team Member.
- ◆ A BIRS Team Member may offer to connect a complainant with appropriate support personnel at

the University, which include the following:

- ◆ Student complainants: Student Success Advocates, the Office of Spiritual Life and/or the Trone Center for Mental Fitness
- ◆ Staff complainants: Staff Ombudsperson and/or the Office of Spiritual Life
- ◆ Faculty complainants: Faculty Ombudsperson and/or the Office of Spiritual Life
- ◆ The BIRS Team Coordinator may convene additional members of the University to make recommendations regarding response and support. If warranted by the severity of the incident, a University response to the incident will be developed and implemented in a timely manner.
- ◆ The BIRS Team Coordinator will maintain a record of the incident, support, and response. Data of reported bias incidents will be shared with the university community each semester.
- ◆ Those who report bias incidents are expected to have done so in good faith. Should a concern arise that an alleged incident was fabricated or submitted under false pretenses, the University reserves the right to utilize appropriate disciplinary procedures to address the misuse of the BIRS process.

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Furman University does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, pregnancy, disability, age, religion, veteran status, or any other characteristic or status protected by applicable local, state, or federal law in admission, treatment, or access to, or employment in, its programs and activities.