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# BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE AND SUPPORT

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Furman University emphasizes the worth of all people. Acts that violate this core value will not be tolerated. Accordingly, Furman has implemented a Bias Incident Response & Support (BIRS) plan that is managed by the BIRS Team. The BIRS team addresses bias incidents occurring within the University community that involve students, staff, faculty, alumni, and visitors to campus.

*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 or hate crimes. Its purpose is to supplement and work with campus units to connect those who have experienced an act of bias (or those who have witnessed such an act) with appropriate support and resources. Furthermore, the BIRS team works with campus units and offices to coordinate the response to incidents that are likely to affect the campus climate.*

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

The Bias Incident Response & Support (BIRS) Team includes the Chief Diversity Officer, Assistant Dean of Student Conduct, Title IX & ADA 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 and Director of Housing and Residence Life; Associate Dean and Director of the Center for Inclusive Communities; and other members of the university community as appropriate. The BIRS Team oversees the following BIRS plan, partners with the Furman Police and other campus partners as appropriate, and works with University Communications to update the campus community.

## *What is a Bias Incident?*

Bias is a preconceived, negative attitude or belief about a person or group based on their 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. Biased behavior is antithetical to the University's values and affirmation of diversity and inclusion as described in the Furman University [Nondiscrimination Policy](#).

The Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crime Statistics Act or Clery Act of 1990 establishes federal guidelines to determine whether a bias incident reaches the threshold of a hate crime. All hate crimes are bias incidents, but not all bias incidents are hate crimes.

**Bias incidents** are *any conduct* that serves no scholarly purpose appropriate to the academic environment and demonstrates prejudice or intolerance against an individual or group based on any identity classification noted in the first paragraph of Section III of this policy.

**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.

While not all bias incidents are hate crimes, the University acknowledges that biased behavior can be hateful and inflict harm to members of our community. The examples below are not exhaustive; rather, they characterize types of biased behavior. Examples of bias incidents that may fall short of hate crimes include:

Comments that express harmful stereotypes about the above categories, e.g., jokes about religious practices.

Words or symbols on a residence hall room message/dry erase board that express bias against

the above categories, e.g., sexist or racist language or images.

T-shirts promoting a campus party with language or imagery that objectify women, e.g., messaging that portrays women primarily or exclusively as objects of physical/sexual gratification.

Students posting fliers for the organizational meeting of a new white supremacist student organization.

Display or use of epithets or slurs;

Culturally offensive gestures;

Theme parties that encourage people to wear costumes or act in ways that reinforce stereotypes or are otherwise demeaning; or

Electronic, physical, verbal, or graphic threats or intimidation.

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

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

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

Complete the [Online Report](#)

Complete an in-person report to:

Associate Dean of Diversity, Equity and Inclusive Excellence (faculty), 864-294-2007,  
Administration Building 200B

Furman Police (faculty, staff, student, or visitor to campus), 864-294-2111, Estridge Commons  
Human Resources (faculty or staff), 864-294-2217, 5013 Old Buncombe Road, Suite D (next to the Walmart Neighborhood Market)  
Student Life (student), 864-294-2202, Suite 215 Trone Student Center

Anonymously via:

Furman's Campus Conduct Hotline, 866-943-5787

The 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. 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.

The Counseling Center (students only) – via phone at (864) 294-3031 or in person on the lower level of Earle Student Health Center;

The Office of Spiritual Life – via phone at (864) 294-2133 or in person on the lower level of Daniel Chapel; or

A University Ombudsperson – visit <https://www.furman.edu/academics/faculty-staff-ombuds/contact/> for more information.

## *What are some examples of support offered by the BIRS plan?*

Assigning a trained support person;  
Connecting faculty to their faculty ombudsperson;  
Connecting staff to their staff ombudsperson;  
Connecting students to counseling services, chaplaincy, or student success coordinators;  
Connecting students to appropriate university offices to pursue reasonable measures such as housing relocation and academic assistance;  
Advising students, faculty and staff on formal grievance options; and  
Other support efforts designed to ameliorate negative effects that complainant(s) may experience.

# *What are some examples of responses offered by the BIRS plan?*

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 prevention strategies; and

Other measures designed to stop biased behavior and prevent reoccurrence.

# *Is there anything that I can do to help “support” a bias incident report that I am submitting?*

Preserving evidence is essential to the University responding to bias incidents. Please act immediately to preserve evidence.

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.

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

All reports received will be reviewed by the BIRS Team Coordinator and Title IX & ADA/Section 504 Coordinator. Both coordinators will promptly engage with the appropriate members of the BIRS Team for consultation in response to bias incidents.

Complainant(s) are identified as an individual or group who files a bias incident report.

Complainant(s) will be contacted within one (1) to three (3) business days by a BIRS Team Member.

A BIRS Team Member will offer to connect a complainant with appropriate support personnel at the University, which include the following:

Student complainants: Student Success Coordinators, the Office of Spiritual Life and/or the Counseling Center

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.

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