

PROTOCOL

RESPONDING TO REPORTED BIAS INCIDENTS

Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity
09-22-2026

Bias Response, housed within the Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity, addresses reported bias incidents that target Penn State students by focusing on incident response and support. The Bias Response Coordinator manages the Bias Response function and reports to the Vice Provost for Educational Equity.

Bias Response is responsible for:

- providing a centralized method for any member of the Penn State community to report an act of bias that they experience or witness.
- receiving, responding to, and appropriately referring reported incidents of bias.
- ensuring support to individuals affected by bias incidents.
- collecting, maintaining, and reporting data related to reported bias incidents.

The Bias Response Team

The Bias Incident Response Protocol is a deliberation and referral process that determines the appropriate referral path for reports of bias incidents at Penn State. The protocol is applied by the Bias Response Team (BRT), which is composed of key university staff from the [Office of the Vice Provost for Educational Equity](#), the [Office of Equal Opportunity and Access](#), and the [Office of Ethics and Compliance](#). The BRT meets weekly to discuss reports received within the previous week and determine the appropriate referral path for each.

Scope of function

The Protocol, while crucial in addressing reported bias incidents, does not aim to resolve the issues raised in bias reports. It also does not supersede the responsibilities of other offices or units that respond to these incidents. Instead, it complements their work by providing a centralized method for reporting bias incidents and referring reporters to the most appropriate resources.

The Bias Response Team is not a disciplinary body. It does not:

- investigate reports
- determine whether reported incidents violate Penn State policy
- recommend actions or solutions
- adjudicate cases
- impose sanctions or discipline alleged wrongdoers

The Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, the Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response, or other relevant administrative units may take disciplinary action as warranted.

Standard response steps

Bias reports are submitted through the online [bias incident report form](#). Once a report is submitted, the following steps are carried out:

1. All members of the Bias Response Team automatically receive the report.
2. The reporter receives an automated confirmation of receipt of the report.
3. Within the next business day, the Bias Response Coordinator sends the submitter a personalized email to confirm receipt of the report, outline next steps, and provide relevant support services that the reporting party may use at their discretion. These resources may include:
 - Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity
 - Counseling and Psychological Services
 - Gender Equity Center
 - Graduate Student Wellness
 - Office of Veterans Programs
 - Student Care and Advocacy
 - Student Disability Resources
 - Student Legal Services
4. If the report contains information that requires a referral to the Behavioral Threat Management Team (BTMT) or University Police & Public Safety (UPPS), these referrals are made immediately after the report has been reviewed by the Bias Response Coordinator and Vice Provost for Educational Equity.
5. The Bias Response Team meets to determine the referral path for each report received within the previous week.
6. The Bias Response Coordinator refers the report to the appropriate party. Referrals depend on the content of the submitted report, the University affiliation of the alleged wrongdoer, and the campus location of the reported incident. Referrals may include:
 - Academic unit heads
 - Non-academic unit heads
 - Office of Equal Opportunity and Access
 - Office of Ethics and Compliance
 - Directors of Student Affairs/Student Services and Engagement (Commonwealth campuses)
 - Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response
 - Residence Life
 - University Police & Public Safety
7. If the reporter requests action, the recipient of the referral is provided with suggestions for offices to consult in managing and resolving the reported concern. Such recommendations depend on the content of the submitted report and may include units such as the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access, Faculty Affairs, Labor and Employee Relations, Residence Life, Student Care and Advocacy, University Police & Public Safety, and others.
8. The Bias Response Coordinator notifies the reporter of the referral and provides the contact information of the individual to whom the report was referred.

9. The individual to whom the report is referred reviews the report, contacts the reporter and involved parties (targeted individual, alleged wrongdoer), and determines a path to respond to the report.
10. Upon resolution of the complaint, the recipient of the referral notifies the Bias Response Coordinator that the report has been addressed and provides a closure date.

Specific referral conditions

Condition	Action
The reported incident involves an emergency or crisis situation, criminal behavior, or a threat to the overall campus community.	The Bias Response Coordinator informs University Police & Public Safety immediately and submits a report to the Behavioral Threat Management Team (BTMT).
The report describes a Clery reportable crime .	The Bias Response Coordinator reports the incident immediately to UPPS via a Clery Incident Report Form. Report statistics are included in an annual report provided to the Clery Act Compliance Team.
The report contains information that requires a review for potential violation of Title VI.	The Bias Response Coordinator refers the report to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (OEOA) for employee alleged wrongdoers or the Office of Ethics and Compliance (OEC) for student alleged wrongdoers.
The report involves employees only (i.e. no student is involved).	The Bias Response Coordinator refers the report to the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (OEOA).
The reported incident involves misconduct that includes sexual or gender-based harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, sexual exploitation, stalking, or retaliation for reporting any of these acts.	The Bias Response Coordinator refers the report to the Office of Sexual Misconduct Reporting & Response (Title IX – for student alleged wrongdoers) or the Office of Equal Opportunity and Access (Title IX – for faculty and staff alleged wrongdoers).
The alleged wrongdoer is a student and the incident may involve a violation of the Code of Conduct .	The Bias Response Coordinator refers the report to the Office of Student Accountability and Conflict Response.
The reported incident occurred in an on-campus housing facility.	The Bias Response Coordinator informs Residence Life.
The reported incident occurred off-campus or via social media.	The Bias Response Coordinator carries out the appropriate next steps, as determined by the BRT, on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances of the reported incident.

Confidentiality and privacy

The BRT keeps information from reports confidential, sharing it only with the University employees involved in resolving a report. Bias Response maintains an electronic record of each report and of the services provided to reporters, targeted individuals, and alleged wrongdoers.

Confidentiality has the following limits:

Condition	Action
There is reason to believe the reporter poses a life-threatening risk to themselves or others.	The BRT may notify the individuals responsible for protecting those at risk.
The reporter is under 18 years of age and discloses that they are a victim of child abuse.	Pennsylvania law (Act 31 of 2014) may require the BRT to report this to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services and to Penn State.
The reporter discloses that an identifiable child (someone under 18) has been the victim of child abuse, even without direct contact with the child.	Pennsylvania law (Act 31 of 2014) may require the BRT to report this to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services and to Penn State.
The reporter discloses that they abused a child when they were 14 years of age or older, even if the child is no longer in danger.	Pennsylvania law (Act 31 of 2014) may require the BRT to report this to Pennsylvania Child Protective Services and to Penn State.
The report describes a Clery Act offense (rape, fondling, incest, statutory rape, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking) that occurred in a Clery Act location.	The BRT files a Campus Security report with the Clery office. This report does not include personally identifiable information.
A court order or search warrant requires disclosure in connection with judicial proceedings.	The BRT discloses the information as required.

About this protocol

This protocol describes Penn State's standard process for responding to reported bias incidents. The protocol will be updated as needed to reflect relevant changes in University policy or practice.

For more information, visit [Bias Response](#). To report an incident, submit the online [bias incident report form](#).