

WENATCHEE VALLEY COLLEGE

BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM (BIRT)

Governing document created January 2018

The Bias Incident Response Team procedures are for reporting bias motivated incidents in which there is no known offender. It addresses campus climate and advocacy for persons affected by bias motivated incidents at Wenatchee Valley College. The BIRT consists of a team of campus employees who are standing members trained in identifying, addressing, and documenting incidences of bias on campus. In cases where an offender can be identified, there are existing campus procedures to follow (as outlined in this document); however, instances in which the offender is unknown, the BIRT acts as the primary point of contact and advocate. The BIRT works closely with other campus departments to ensure the appropriate documentation and reporting of all bias incidences.

A perceived lack of acknowledgement or care on the part of the institution can lead to a disruption in community members' sense of safety on campus and can erode trust in the administration. For these reasons WVC has created the BIRT, a well-trained team ready to respond to incidents.

BIRT Membership: The Bias Incident Response Team should consist of representatives from multiple departments including but not limited to: The Vice President for Student Services, Security, the Office of Diversity and Equity Title IX, Public Relations, Disability Support Services and Counseling. Coordinating these departments allows the institution to be responsive in multiple ways—disciplinary as well as therapeutic responses can be necessary and are often vital to the recovery of the campus community.

ROLE OF THE BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM

- Make every effort to contact person(s) affected within 24 hours. Respect whatever decision they have made and encourage them to pursue some type of assistance.
- Provide advice on the college's discrimination complaint procedures and academic assistance.
- Provide advocacy for the person(s) affected in other proceedings.
- Provide appropriate counseling referral to the person(s) affected.
- Provide appropriate medical referral.
- Swiftly help administration respond to the bias incident appropriately.
- Address campus community concerns and questions.

DEFINITIONS

A bias motivated incident is an action in which a person or group is intentionally targeted and subjected to harassment because of their actual or perceived disability; race, ethnicity, or national origin; religion; sexual orientation, and, sex, gender, gender identity, and gender expression; but the offense does not rise to the level of a crime.

The special nature of a bias incident must be acknowledged by the institution. Bias incidents create disruption of safety for campus community members, not just immediate victims. If the nature of a bias incident is left unaddressed, or treated as a typical security incident, community members will feel unheard and unsafe. Harm spreads quickly to more than the initial victims. Additional victims are the friends and family of the targets, people who identify with the targeted group in any way, and people who identify as members of other targeted groups. Ultimately the community as a whole will feel the impact of a bias incident, leading to a loss of trust in the institution.

PROCEDURES IN REPORTING BIAS MOTIVATED INCIDENTS (UNKNOWN OFFENDER)

Wenatchee Valley College's highest concern is for the emotional and physical wellbeing of persons affected by a bias motivated incident. The person affected shall have access to all appropriate campus services that can help the individual maintain her or his emotional and psychological wellbeing and provide for the safety of the person affected. A member of the Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) will be the first official point of contact, other than campus security, for facilitating access to all needed services. Other departments, if contacted first, will make a referral to a BIRT member.

The BIRT is responsible for carrying out procedures in incidents in which the offender is unknown; however, all alleged bias motivated incidents should be reported to a BIRT member for documentation through the campus incident reporting form.

- If a person is seeking refuge due to an immediate physical threat, the person should be directed immediately to call 911 and the Campus Safety & Security Office. Within 24 hours, the BIRT team must be contacted to determine whether the incident is motivated by bias and to follow documenting and reporting procedures.
- In the instance where there is no clear offender in a bias motivated incident and no immediate physical threat, report the incident directly to a BIRT member. A BIRT member will determine whether the incident is motivated by bias and assist the person affected in completing the Bias Incident Report Form to document the incident.
- Bias incidents should be reported with as much transparency as possible to the community by WVC administration. The community benefits from more information as opposed to less. If WVC community members feel information is being kept or hidden from them they will assume the institution is uncaring or unresponsive.
- Bias incidents must be handled in a timely way. The sooner the institution can provide a coordinated, holistic response that supports the community's emotional as well as physical safety, the sooner the community can begin the work of recovery from the incident. A campus has much greater chance of growing closer as a supportive community if bias is handled swiftly and effectively.

SAFETY & SECURITY CONTACT

Safety and Security Manager- Maria Agnew, magnew@wvc.edu, 509-682-6659

CURRENT BIRT MEMBERS:

Chair: Erin Tofte-Nordvik

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BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE FLOWCHART

