

## Ombuds Office



## DISCRIMINATION

A guide prepared by the HMS/HSDM/HSPH Ombuds Office

*What is discrimination?*

DISCRIMINATION is different treatment due to race, color, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identification, disability, national or ethnic origin, veteran status, political beliefs unrelated to job or course of study or other protected basis.

*What does it look like?*

Any behavior evidently intended to dishonor characteristics such as race, gender, national origin or ethnic group, religious belief, sexual orientation or gender identity may be discriminatory harassment.

This includes actions that isolate, humiliate, and silence an individual, as well as those that limit his or her capacity to be a contributing member of the community.

Discrimination has serious impact, stifling rational discourse as well as hurting individuals. People who experience discrimination often are distracted from learning, cannot work effectively and are reluctant to join in community discussions.



## OMBUDS OFFICE

Harvard Medical School  
Harvard School of Dental Medicine  
Harvard School of Public Health

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The Ombudsperson, who is available to all HMS/HSDM/HSPH staff, students, trainees and affiliated faculty, provides a confidential, independent and informal forum in which the Ombudsperson can help people clarify their concerns, identify their goals and consider all their options in managing or resolving any concern affecting work or studies. The Ombudsperson can also provide information about formal complaint processes.

**NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY**

It is the strong and consistent policy of Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Dental Medicine and Harvard School of Public Health to treat all community members with respect, provide an environment conducive to learning and working and ensure equal access to rights, privileges and opportunities without regard to race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, veteran status or disability.

Discrimination on the basis of these characteristics is inconsistent with the above principles and violates obligations of non-discrimination imposed by law and Harvard policy.\*

Harvard Medical School, Harvard School of Dental Medicine and Harvard School of Public Health are committed to diversity of views and the principles of free inquiry and expression.

*This means:*

- All members of the HMS, HSDM and HSPH communities have the right to hold and vigorously defend and promote their opinions.
- Respect for this right requires that community members tolerate expressions of opinions they may find repugnant or offensive, subject to obligations of civility and respect that underlie rational discourse.
- Racial, sexual and intense personal harassment, for example, show grave disrespect for the dignity of others, prevent rational discourse, inhibit inquiry and education, may violate law and Harvard policy and may require disciplinary action.

\*The full text of "Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Dental Medicine Procedures for Resolving Complaints of Discrimination, Harassment, or Unprofessional Relationships and Abuse of Authority" is at <http://www.hms.harvard.edu/ombuds/>. Harvard School of Public Health policies can be found at <http://www.harvard.edu/>, search: "HSPH non-discrimination."

# DISCRIMINATION: What should you do?

## *If you believe you are a target of discrimination*

- **Document the behavior that you find objectionable**, including details about dates, times, and statements or acts.
- **Tell someone.** Consult one of the resources listed below. People in these offices can recommend formal or informal ways to address concerns.
- **Be aware of some reasons people remain silent**, including concern about confronting someone more powerful and fear of reprisal. The Ombuds, as well as people in some of the other offices listed below, can help you discuss your situation in a confidential setting.
- **Understand the difference between misunderstanding and inappropriate behavior.** In today's multicultural environment, misunderstandings can occur. Take time to explore others' motivations.

## *If you are a supervisor or have authority over others*

- **If someone reports a concern to you, you have a responsibility** to consult with the person who reported the complaint and seek assistance immediately. People in the offices listed below can help.
- **If you see or suspect discrimination, take the initiative** and get help or call your Office of Human Resources. You do not have to act alone.
- **Remember: You are a role model for everyone around you.** Treat everyone with respect and dignity. Use your power over others with care and attention.
- **Educate yourself and others.** Differences in people's cultures, personal styles and backgrounds can create challenging interactions. Recognize and appreciate the distinction between these differences and true discrimination.

## *If you are a peer or colleague who sees offensive behavior*

- **Keep a record of the behavior that you find objectionable**, including details about dates, times, and statements or acts.
- **If you witness behavior that you believe to be discriminatory, ask the person** who you believe is being discriminated against how you might be most helpful.
- **Many people don't know where to turn.** Refer others to the offices on the list below, which offer formal and informal ways to discuss concerns.
- **People who are discriminated against** but do not speak up, for whatever reason, often report feeling upset with themselves as well as the situation. You can help by supporting others.
- **Be aware of your own behavior** -- both words and deeds.



**OMBUDS OFFICE**  
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Harvard School of Dental Medicine  
Harvard School of Public Health  
ombuds (617) 432-4040  
office (617) 432-4041

Offices of Human Resources

HMS (617) 432-2035  
HSDM (617) 432-5913  
HSPH (617) 432-0979

Human Resources Offices at the affiliates

## *Where to get help*

HMS Office for Diversity, Inclusion  
and Community Partnership (617) 432-2413  
Harvard University Police Department  
Medical campus (617) 432-1212  
Main campus (617) 495-1212  
University Health Service (617) 432-1370  
Chaplain (617) 495-5529

The Officers of  
Harvard Medical School  
Harvard School of Dental Medicine  
Harvard School of Public Health  
Harvard Union of Clerical  
and Technical Workers (617) 661-8289  
Massachusetts Commission  
Against Discrimination (617) 727-3990  
Equal Employment  
Opportunity Commission (617) 565-3200