



GUIDE TO CIVILITY

Creating a culture of respect

April 2016

INTRODUCTION

The *Guide to Civility* provides practices to promote civility in the workplace and processes to deal with incivility, in accordance with Guelph Independent Living's (GIL) *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy*, which states:

"All employees have a responsibility to act in good faith and be active participants in contributing to the creation and enhancement of a community culture of respect, inclusion, civility, dignity and understanding of the people with whom they work. This requires taking action to deal with incidents of incivility."

The Policy applies to any uncivil behaviour that may impact GIL's Employees (Managers, Supervisors, Administration Staff and Workers), regardless of the status of individuals responsible for the incivility. The uncivil behaviour may be directed to, or by, Employees, clients, volunteers, contractors or visitors.

Through this Guide, the *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy* and *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy* and Practice, the Employer maintains a comprehensive harassment and violence program as required by the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*. This Guide is also a part of the Employer's *Health and Safety Policy Manual*.

These guidelines are to provide guidance on the application of legal, collective agreement and policy provisions and aid in decision making.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE CIVIL?

Civility is about more than merely being polite, although being polite is an excellent start. Civility is about being aware of other people's feelings, listening and seeking common ground as an initial point for dialogue when differences occur, while at the same time recognizing that differences are enriching. Through positive, respectful communication, one person has the power to improve morale, teamwork and productivity.

HOW DOES INCIVILITY AFFECT THE WORKPLACE?

Incivility and disrespect in the workplace can be a barrier to effective communication, coaching and performance. Incivility deals with a broad range of unacceptable behaviours which compromise and devalue the individual, and there may be severe psychological and physical impacts. For example, violence in the workplace may have origins in minor acts of incivility long before physical violence occurs.

At a basic level, incivility can be in the form of:

- unprofessional behaviour;
- rude comments;
- insensitive actions;
- unintentional slights;

- complaining;
- gossip;
- rumours;
- crude jokes;
- profanity, and
- displaying offensive material that is visible to others in the workplace.

As issues escalate, incivility can become more verbally aggressive and can include:

- yelling or shouting;
- belittling comments;
- intimidation or bullying;
- discriminatory comments;

This can lead to a poisoned work environment. At its most extreme, incivility can take the form of harassment, violence or threats of violence.

Incivility can be subtle or overt. It may be a single event or may involve a continuing series of incidents, and may involve the abuse of authority or position. Uncivil behaviour may be unintended or deliberately directed at another individual. In any case, the impact on that individual is what must be addressed; at any time, a report of incivility may be transitioned to a report of workplace violence or harassment.

INCIVILITY, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE

Everyone that works for or visits GIL has a right to expect a healthy, safe and caring environment.

However, the behaviours described above, have the potential of developing into workplace violence or harassment under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. If behaviour is related to one or more personal characteristics that are protected under the *Human Rights Code*, or meets the legal definition of workplace harassment, the Employer's *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy* and Practice will apply.

Incivility can also include violence. Workplace violence is managed under the Employer's *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy* and Practice, which requires all Employees to report incidents of workplace violence and behaviours that may indicate a risk of workplace violence.

BEING PROACTIVE TO CREATE A CIVIL WORK ENVIRONMENT

All Employees

The Employer-Employee Relations Committee (EERC) has designed the following list of tips to help all Employees be proactive in creating a congenial and team oriented work environment:

- *Treat your co-workers, peers, supervisors, and clients with respect.*
- *Always work to create a safe and welcoming environment.*

- *Always do your best to make sure nothing you do will harm any other individual's mental or physical health or wellbeing.*
- *Demonstrate a positive attitude.*
- *Take responsibility, by being accountable for what you say and do.*
- *Before speaking or acting, consider the impact of your words and actions on others.*
- *When there is an issue, act in a timely fashion and talk to the other person(s) directly, not to coworker(s) behind their back; do not let issues fester.*
- *Think in terms of 'we' rather than 'they' and act accordingly.*
- *Don't take feedback, suggestions or constructive criticism of your work as a personal attack. See it as a positive contribution and inspiration to excel.*
- *Strive to be sensitive, non-judgemental and open-minded by respecting different lifestyles, values and beliefs. Be careful about making assumptions about other people's behaviour and intent based on your own values, beliefs and customs. Specific actions that are considered impolite or rude can vary dramatically by place, time and context. Differences, including but not limited to, social role, gender, social class, religion and cultural identity may all affect the perception of a given behaviour. Consequently, a behaviour that is considered perfectly acceptable by some people, and in some cultures, may be considered rude by others.*
- *Regarding language and subject matter; be sensitive to other peoples' ears around you.*
- *Approach situations and people in a positive, non-reactive manner.*
- *Acknowledge the contributions of other Employees.*
- *Understand your triggers; knowing what makes you angry and frustrated enables you to manage your reactions and respond in a more appropriate manner.*
- *Be willing to apologize sincerely to others if you said or did something that may have offended them.*
- *Use active listening when discussing issues with others.*
- *Ask questions to clarify and obtain the right information about underlying issues, rather than relying on gossip.*
- *Work cooperatively and collaboratively within and across teams.*
- *Accept and embrace change.*
- *Protect the privacy and confidentiality of your coworkers by not giving out personal information, unless it is necessary in an emergency situation.*

Supervisor

A supervisor is anyone with a supervisory role over another employee; in our workplace this generally refers to the Executive Director, a Manager, or a Coordinator.

Supervisors are expected to be proactive in creating a congenial and team orientated work environment as discussed above, but because they regularly comment and offer advice on the work performance or work-related behaviour of employees, there are further tips below for being proactive when in this role.

Legitimate comment and/or advice is not a sign of disrespect. It differs from incivility or harassment in that feedback is intended to assist employees to improve work performance or the standard of their

behaviour. However, civility does require that even the most critical feedback be delivered respectfully, privately and courteously.

The following tips can help supervisors be proactive in creating a congenial and team oriented work environment.

1. Treat employees, peers and superiors with respect.
2. Tap your employee's hidden talents and bring them to the front.
3. Do not play favourites and show bias when dealing with your employees.
4. Trust your employees to do their job effectively.
5. Depersonalize meetings or group discussions where the purpose involves constructive criticism and feedback for the whole team.
6. Do not over react to mistakes that happen inadvertently. Instead, help your employees to understand the error so they do not repeat it. A loud, condescending or rude tone of voice may make employees tune out the message you are trying to convey or get their backs up.
7. Make employees feel like they count. Every employee likes to know they are making a positive contribution.
8. Constructive criticism works. If you feel that an employee has the potential to do much better at their job, take him/her aside to discuss. Sometimes, knowing a Supervisor believes in you pushes you to achieve more.
9. Do not flaunt your authority; "You have to do it because I say so" is not the way to get employees' respect. You may get the job done, but you will lose your employees' loyalty in the process.

Active Listening

When applied in appropriate situations, active listening is one of the most important skills Employees can utilize to deal with and avoid issues of incivility. How well you listen has a major impact on your job effectiveness and on the quality of your relationships with others. There are five key elements of active listening. They all help ensure that you really hear the other person, and that the other person knows you are hearing what they are saying.

1. Pay attention. Give the speaker your undivided attention, and acknowledge the message.
2. Show that you are listening. Use body language and gestures to convey your attention. Recognize that non-verbal communication also "speaks" loudly.
3. Provide feedback. Our personal filters, assumptions, judgements and beliefs can distort what we hear. As a listener, your role is to understand what is being said. This may require you to reflect what is being said and ask questions.
4. Defer judgement. Interrupting frustrates the speaker and limits full understanding of the message.
5. Respond appropriately. Active listening is a model for respect and understanding. You are gaining information and perspective. Even if you do not agree with another person's perspective, you should respect and acknowledge their feelings.

DEALING WITH INCIVILITY

In order to create and maintain a civil workplace culture and environment, it is important to identify incidents of incivility and to deal with incidents quickly and appropriately. Addressing incidents of incivility as soon as possible is an important preventative measure to reduce the risk of escalating the severity of behaviour and the potential for workplace violence and harassment.

The following guidelines apply to all employees, as well as other individuals subject to the policy under the terms of contracts or agreement.

COURSES OF ACTION

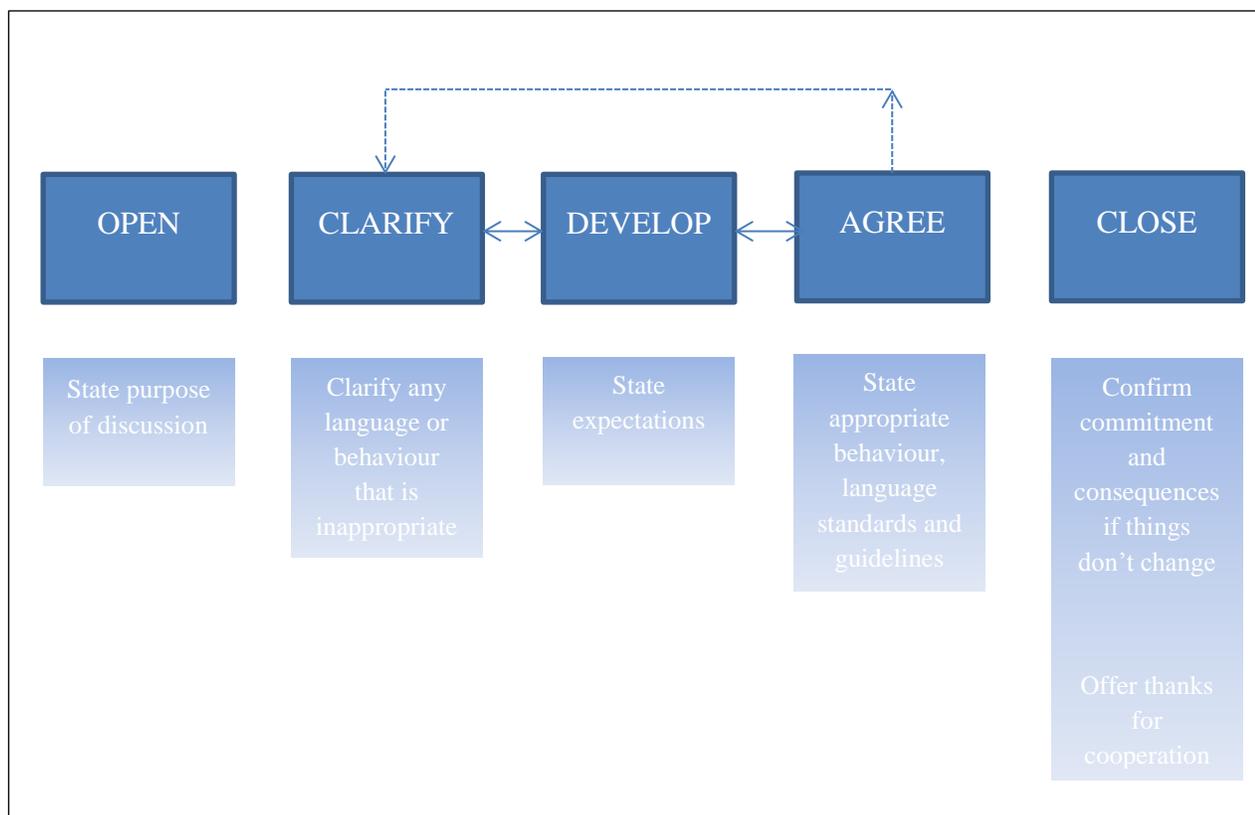
Whenever feasible, the following steps should be followed in addressing civility related concerns and complaints:

1. Peer to peer communication: The parties involved should attempt to resolve issues in the moment or as soon as possible from when the uncivil actions occurred.
2. If the parties involved cannot effectively resolve the issue on their own, the complainant(s) should notify their Supervisor/Designate. The Supervisor/Designate will make inquiries into the issue, and will attempt to remedy the situation within a reasonable time period. This remedy will include a meeting between the two parties, Supervisor(s) and union representatives, as applicable.
3. In the event that the matter is still not resolved, the parties may invite the Manager, Human Resources and/or the Executive Director to participate in a meeting(s) to provide support and advice in remedying the situation.

STRUCTURING A CONVERSATION ABOUT INCIVILITY

The *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy* states that the first step, whenever possible, is to approach the person whose conduct is at issue. That person may not be aware of how his/her behaviour is affecting you or others and should be given an opportunity to change their behaviour.

Approaching someone regarding a civility issue can be difficult. Employees may seek advice and assistance at any time from their Supervisor, the Manager, Human Resources and/or the Executive Director, or union representatives. The following is a basic coaching model to use as a tool for structuring conversations about incivility in a positive and productive manner that respects both parties, and helps bring resolution. Sample statements are provided to help get conversations started.



Step 1: Open – State the purpose of the discussion

- I've asked for this meeting to talk to you about...
- I appreciate you giving me the opportunity to discuss this problem with you.
- Can I see you for a minute? I'd like to talk about...

Step 2: Clarify – Identify issues and concerns; clarify any language or behaviour that is inappropriate.

- What exactly was said/done?
- Has this behaviour happened before?
- Who else has been affected?
- Can you tell me more about what happened?
- Do you think what you said/did is consistent with our *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy*?

Step 3: Develop – Explore individual needs and discuss ideas; state expectations.

- How can we resolve this situation?
- Are you comfortable addressing the person directly?
- You may not think it's serious, but it's important to be respectful of each other.
- What can you do to help?
- What would you like to see done differently?

Step 4: Agree – Discuss and agree on specific actions. State appropriate behaviour, language standards and guidelines. Sometimes, you may have to go back and re-clarify specific details or courses of action, to ensure both parties have a clear understanding.

- In the future I need you to...
- Here's what we talked about...
- Here are the steps we agreed on, including my role...
- Regardless of ____, we need to act with civility and respect towards each other at all times.

Step 5: Close – Confirm commitment. Confirm consequences if things don't change; thank parties for cooperation.

- Thank you for bringing this to my attention.
- Thank you for having this open and honest discussion with me.

Tips for Talking about Your Own Behaviour

Civility can often be unintentional, and there may be times when you may not have intended to offend another person. These conversations may be difficult, especially if you feel you have done nothing wrong. The following are some tips you can follow to help ensure the conversation remains positive and productive. Remember, you are trying to have productive, cooperative and collaborative relationships with the people you work with.

- Try not to become defensive.
- Listen without interrupting.
- Use active listening – do not plan your response until the person is finished talking.
- Reflect back what you are hearing.
- Ask clarifying questions.
- If you do not understand what they would like you to change, ask more questions to clarify.
- Try to imagine their perspective, and how it is affecting their work and life.
- Remember, if they have come to you, it is serious to them.
- If you feel your behaviour has been misunderstood, explain.
- Agree to future interactions.

INCIVILITY INVESTIGATION

Supervisors/designates are accountable for addressing issues of incivility in an appropriate manner. Supervisors may seek advice and assistance at any time from the Manager, Human Resources and/or the Executive Director. Supervisors/designates must act in a confidential manner, and involve only those who need to know, either to respond to, or to effectively address, complaints.

Supervisors/designates must determine whether or not the employee's concerns should be addressed under the *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy* and Guide, or whether another policy/procedure is appropriate including the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy* and Practice. If the concerns do not fall under this Guide, the employee must be informed regarding how the matter will be addressed.

The following is an outline of steps to be taken to deal with cases of incivility involving employees. Where more than one supervisor is involved, this is a joint responsibility.

Definitions

Complainant: An employee who has made a complaint under this policy, whether formal or informal, alleging that offensive behaviour has occurred. A complainant may be a third party.

Respondent: An employee(s) against whom allegations of offensive behaviour are made and may include a Supervisor who is alleged to have failed to take reasonable action in the circumstances, to protect an employee from offensive behaviour.

Step 1: Intake

1. Speak with the complainant to understand his/her perspective.
2. Determine whether the complaint involves the kind of behaviour that can be dealt with by a simple intervention between the parties. Consider the seriousness of the allegation and the complainant's feelings. If the allegation is serious, relates to prolonged behaviour, or if the complainant expresses serious concern, the complaint should be formally investigated in accordance with this Guide.
3. Assess whether the matter should be investigated under another policy. Harassment allegations related to personal characteristics protected by the *Ontario Human Rights Code* will fall under the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy and Practice*
4. Assess whether any behaviours may indicate a risk of workplace violence; Supervisors/designates must report such behaviours and seek assistance in managing the risk of violence from the Executive Director or Manager, Human Resources. The investigation will fall under the *Workplace Violence and Harassment Prevention Policy and Practice*

Step 2: Making Inquiries and Fact Finding

1. Investigate to understand the complainant's perspective on the situation.
2. Investigate to understand the respondent's perspective on the situation.
 - a) If unionized, either one or both of the employees may have a union steward present.
 - b) If the employee declines union representation, they must sign a waiver.
3. Understand any witness' perspectives on the situation (if applicable).
4. Take thorough notes of conversations, including specific details of what was discussed: who, what, when, where and why.
5. Assess whether all relevant information (including emails, etc.) has been gathered. Before concluding the investigation, assess whether the respondent and complainant have been given a fair chance to consider and give input on the other party's position and evidence.

Step 3: Review and Analysis

1. Review all information gathered (including emails, etc.).
2. Seek advice from other supports as necessary on the validity of your conclusions.
3. Draw conclusions about what happened and how it happened. Draw conclusions about whether the complaint is substantiated i.e. whether the respondent was uncivil and/or whether the respondent engaged in harassment.

Step 4: Develop a Response

1. Review relevant collective agreement provisions and disciplinary history. Decide how the complaint will be resolved.
2. In situations involving employees from more than one program, Supervisors/designates from each program should discuss the situation and collectively determine appropriate action.
3. Generally, if a claim is found to be substantiated it will result in some level of corrective action involving the respondent. The type of corrective action taken will depend on all the circumstances, including what happened and how, the respondent's job responsibilities and disciplinary history and the respondent's reaction to the investigation.
4. The usual practice of the Employer is to deal with instances of inappropriate and unacceptable behaviour through progressive discipline. Therefore appropriate options for addressing the situation must be determined which may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Communication of standards and expectations concerning performance, conduct and/or behaviour
 - b. Coaching
 - c. Letter of counsel (written documentation reviewing the steps taken to date)
 - d. Verbal warning
 - e. Written warning
 - f. Suspension(s) with or without pay
 - g. Termination

Seek advice from the Manager, Human Resources and/or the Executive Director in determining the appropriate action.

5. Supervisor(s)/designate(s) will communicate to the respondent that if expectations are not met, progressive discipline will be taken up to and including termination.
6. Supervisor(s)/designate(s) will monitor the situation, and follow up with the complainant to ensure that uncivil behaviours have ceased, and there is no escalation/reprisal.

In cases of gross misconduct (defined in the workplace as an objectionable action that is willful and cannot be described as a mistake or an act of negligence) significant action may be taken without proceeding through all of the progressive steps. It is important to note that the provisions of the respondent's collective agreement and/or Employer's policies will guide decision makers with respect to the imposition of discipline.

INCIVILITY BY OTHERS TOWARDS EMPLOYEES

In cases where an employee makes a formal complaint about incivility toward someone who is not an employee e.g. client, volunteer, visitor, contractor, etc., the Supervisor of the complainant must investigate and determine appropriate action in consultation with the appropriate persons.

INCIVILITY BY EMPLOYEES TOWARDS OTHERS

In cases where a complaint of incivility is made about an employee by someone who is not an employee, e.g. client, volunteer, visitor, contractor, etc., the Supervisor of the respondent must investigate and determine appropriate action in consultation with the appropriate persons, if any. In such cases, consultation would take place with the Employer representative responsible for the non-employee.

Progressive discipline may be taken on the same basis as outlined above for cases where the respondent is an employee.

RESOURCES AND LINKS:

- *A Guide to the Respectful Workplace Policy*. The City of Calgary:
<https://www.calgary.ca/CS/HR/Documents/Careers/Respectful-Workplace-Guide.pdf?noredirect=1>
- *Chapter 4: Healthy and Productive Work Environment, Human Resources Management Manual*. Government of Nova Scotia:
<https://www.novascotia.ca/treasuryboard/manuals/PDF/500/50409.pdf>
- *Workplace Civility and Respect Policy*. Ryerson University:
<http://www.ryerson.ca/policies/board/workcivilitypolicy.html>