

St. Mary's College of Maryland

Bias Prevention and Support Team

Policy and Procedures

According to The St. Mary's Way, at St. Mary's College of Maryland we aspire to be a community "where people are engaged in an ongoing dialogue that values differences and the unique contributions of others' talents, backgrounds, customs, and world views." Similarly, we aspire to be a place "where people contribute to a spirit of caring and an ethic of service," and a community where students, faculty, and staff of varying perspectives can thrive in a learning environment that is free from violence, harassment and discrimination.

The Bias Prevention and Support Team contributes to the College's efforts to live out The St. Mary's Way by establishing a prompt, consistent, and sensitive process to respond to bias-related incidents.

A. Definitions of Bias-Related Incidents and Hate Crimes

Bias-related incidents are acts that demonstrate bias on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, ethnicity, age, marital status, physical or mental disability, protected veteran status, or any other characteristic protected by law.

As defined here, bias-related incidents are ones that do not rise to the level of discrimination or harassment prohibited by law (such as Title IX sexual harassment, Title VI or Title VII discrimination on the basis of race, ability-based discrimination under the Americans with Disabilities Act, and others). In many cases, the determination of whether a bias-related incident will be addressed by the Bias Prevention and Support Team or another College office or official will be based on the severity and/or pervasiveness of the reported conduct, as determined by a reasonable person.

Examples of bias-related incidents may include graffiti on the wall of a campus building or a theme party based on racial or ethnic stereotypes.

Hate crimes are addressed by the Office of Public Safety in conjunction with local law enforcement, not the Bias Prevention and Support Team. Hate crimes include numerous criminal acts (including vandalism, theft, simple assault, or intimidation) where there is evidence victims were intentionally selected because of their actual or perceived race, gender, gender identity, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, national origin or disability. For more information, including the full list of criminal offenses that may be considered hate crimes, see the Office of Public Safety's [Annual Security & Fire Safety Report](#).

For more information about the College's prohibition on discrimination, see the [Non-Discrimination Policy](#).

B. Purpose

The Bias Prevention and Support Team (the Team) serves two primary purposes:

- To implement a prompt, consistent, and sensitive process to respond to bias-related incidents, aligned with The St. Mary's Way. The Team complements and works with other campus entities to connect students, faculty, and staff who have been affected by bias-related incidents to the appropriate support and resources.
- To review the reports the Team receives to collect aggregate data, assess the campus climate, and identify educational and outreach opportunities.

C. Members

The Team is co-chaired by the Chief Diversity Officer and the Assistant Vice President of Equity and Inclusion. Other members include the Dean of Students; a faculty representative from the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity Committee or the Faculty Issues Committee of the Faculty Senate; and other campus personnel charged with assessing and addressing issues that occur in the community that contradict the spirit of The St. Mary's Way.

Team members may consult relevant College faculty, staff, and legal counsel as needed.

D. Services

The Team does not investigate policy violations or administer disciplinary action. Upon receipt of a report of a bias-related incident, the Team Co-Chairs will make a determination as to whether the report should be handled by the Team or referred to another College office or official for investigation as a potential violation of College policy. Those offices and officials may include, but are not limited to, Public Safety, Student Conduct, Human Resources, and Title IX Compliance and Training. Alleged hate crimes will be referred to Public Safety for investigation.

The types of support and resources offered by the Team may include, but are not limited to:

- **Meetings with Impacted Individual(s):** Meetings to gather more information and support impacted individuals or groups in the aftermath of bias-related incidents
- **Resource Referrals:** Identification of and referral to appropriate support services and resources, on- or off-campus
- **Conflict Resolution:** Strategies for conflict resolution through mediation, restorative justice, or dialogue approaches
- **Engagement with Campus Leadership:** Engagement to identify and address systemic issues
- **Prevention and Outreach:** Efforts to increase campus awareness through training for students, faculty, and staff; educational materials; and support of programs and initiatives for all campus community members.

The Bias Prevention and Support Team policy language is adapted, with permission, from Davidson College's [Bias Education and Response](#) policies.

E. When a Report is Filed

First, the Team Co-Chairs will conduct an **initial assessment** of the report. As part of the initial assessment, the Team Co-Chairs will consider the following factors when determining whether a bias-related incident may be addressed by the Team or investigated as a potential College policy violation or hate crime:

- Whether the College knows the identity of the alleged offender;
- The severity of the reported act, assessed from both an *objective* (i.e., reasonable person standard) and *subjective* (i.e., the viewpoint of the targeted individual) perspective;

- How often the behavior has occurred and the number of individual(s) affected by the acts (pervasiveness); and
- The extent to which the acts interfere with the targeted individuals' ability to perform their job or engage in their academic experience.

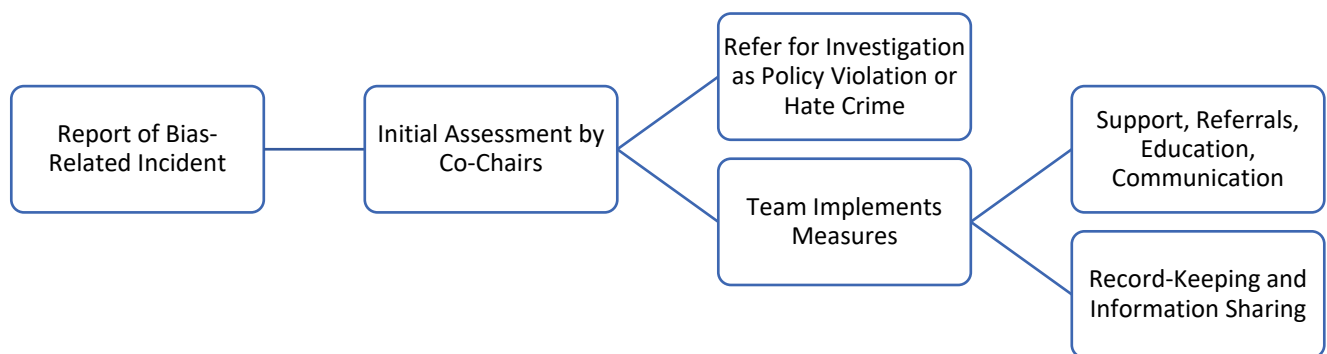
Bias-related incidents in which offender is known and the incidents are reported as severe, pervasive and/or interfering with an individual's or group of individuals' ability to engage in their academic experience or perform their job shall be referred to the appropriate office, such as Student Conduct, Human Resources, Academic Affairs, and/or Title IX Compliance and Training.

Second, the Team may consider and implement any **appropriate measures** to address the incident. Such measures may include:

- Assessing the circumstances of the incident in a thorough and timely way,
- Supporting the affected person(s) through referrals to appropriate resources,
- Making referrals to appropriate campus officials so that action can be taken,
- Identifying and assisting in implementing an appropriate educational response and community outreach, and
- Notifying the St. Mary's College community, as appropriate.

Third, the Chief Diversity Officer will maintain the **appropriate records**, as described below, and will share information with the campus community.

The process chart below summarizes the Team's process:



Throughout the process, all individuals and reports are treated with **privacy, sensitivity, and respect**, and in accordance with federal, state, and campus guidelines. Any personal information obtained during the response process will be subject to disclosure only to the extent required by law, or as required for the College to respond appropriately. In instances where bias incidents require campus-wide communication, the College will communicate with any impacted individuals or groups to determine how to balance privacy and transparency.

F. Academic Freedom

In a classroom or academic setting, the expression of an idea or a point of view may be offensive or hurtful to some people. The Bias Prevention and Support Team honors the principles and exercise of academic freedom within the College community.

As stated in Section I.C. of the College's Faculty Bylaws, "Academic freedom is the freedom to discuss all relevant matters in the classroom, to explore all avenues of scholarship, research, and creative expression, and to speak or write without institutional discipline or restraint on matters of public concern as well as on matters related to professional duties and the functioning of the College."

While situations occurring in an academic setting may be protected by academic freedom, the Team is available to provide support and connect any concerned members of the community to the appropriate resources.

G. Records

The Chief Diversity Officer will maintain summary reports of bias incidents and hate crimes for information-gathering and archival purposes for seven years. Through record keeping, the Bias Prevention and Support Team will be better-equipped to identify any patterns of bias and discrimination that exist on campus, which will inform the College's efforts towards incident response and diversity education. Data collection will be coordinated with Public Safety to ensure compliance with the Clery Act with regards to hate crimes occurring on college campuses.