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MEMORANDUM

Date: October 27, 2026

To: DPAC Co-Chairs

From: Robert M. Myers, Campus Counsel

Subject: Civility Policies

At the August 26, 2026 DPAC meeting, I agreed to assemble background information on civility policies. Please let me know when you would like to agendize this item so I can check on Michael Gennaco's availability.

The following materials are attached:

- City of Davis Civility Policy (Pages 1-3)
- State University of New York (Cobleskill) Civility in the Workplace Policy (Pages 4-6)
- Toronto Metropolitan University, Respectful Workplace Policy (Pages 7-17)
- SHRM Workplace Civility Handbook (Pages 18-34)
- Clark, C. M., & Ritter, K. (2018). Policy to foster civility and support a healthy academic work environment. *Journal of Nursing Education, 57*(6), 325-331. https://doi.org/10.3928/01484834-20180522-02 (Pages 35-41)
- A journal article that surveys various interventions to address workplace mistreatment: Leake, G., Amankwaa, A. & de Pater, I.E. Workplace Mistreatment: A Systematic Review of Interventions and Future Research Agenda. *J Bus Ethics* **204**, 523–564 (2026). https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-025-06058-x (Pages 42-83)
- AAUP, Civility (Pages 84-86)
- The State Bar of California, Guide to the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism (Pages 87-117)
- The State Bar of California, Civility Policy Training Materials (Pages 118-200)

STAFF REPORT

DATE: December 14, 2021

TO: City Council

FROM: Mike Webb, City Manager

SUBJECT: Principles of Civility

Recommendation
Receive an informational report on the Principles of Civility adopted by staff.

Fiscal Impact
There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

Council Goal(s)
Foster Excellence in City Services
Objective 3 – Cultivate positive workplace dynamics.
A. Utilize the Principles of Civility in all aspects of staff interactions and communications.
B. Bring forward the Principles of Civility for consideration by the City Council.
C. Review and update city policies related to human resources, inclusivity and diversity.
D. Provide training opportunities to staff related to provision of excellent customer service.
F. Promote opportunities for enhanced workplace morale and sense of team.

Commission Input
The is an informational report on an administrative staff program.

Background and Analysis
As a city organization we have been faced with a multitude of challenges and uncertainties the last two years. The world has grappled with COVID as new norms of social interaction, largely out of necessity for public health, are set. Along the way we are seeing higher levels of participation and access to governance (amongst other aspects of our lives) than even before with the proliferation of online meetings tools, social media, and other tools that provide immediate access where venues previously may have only been available via “in person” participation. With this backdrop in 2020, it was important that we took the opportunity to identify and reflect internally as a city staff team on those qualities that make us an organization that does not lose its “human touch” and that we perform with excellence and professionalism – whether in person or on Zoom, or via email and all other manner of interface, when faced with adversity, and even sometimes incivility.

Our performance as staff, and the professional and collegial atmosphere in which we function every day, is anchored in each of us abiding by certain principles of civility – principles that we may or may not consciously think about even as we practice them. From time to time it is important that we consciously consider those principles. To that end, in late 2020 I engaged our staff team in discussions to identify and commit to paper those qualities of civility that are reflective of how we all perform as a city team. What we arrived at after active deliberations and

brainstorming, was a set of “Principles of Civility**”**. These principles reflect who we are as an organization, and describe those attributes of civility that we strive to achieve each and every day in the workplace. The Principles guide our interactions amongst one another as city staff, and establish expectations for how city staff strive to interact with the community we serve. There is no expectation, and certainly no requirement, that these principles are applied to or expected of anyone outside of city staff.

As City Manager I am incredibly proud of how we embrace and demonstrate these principles as a staff team. While we may not always “bat 1,000” in our execution of these principles, we should always give 100% in striving to do so. Therefore, as an organization we have committed these principles to paper so that we can continually remind ourselves of them, so that we can help one another in our constant pursuit to achieve them, and provide staff the tools and training to do so. The principles are showcased in a summary version on posters in our workspaces (right alongside the City Council Goals) as a constant reminder to us, and are highlighted in staff trainings, including City Manager discussions with departments about their implementation. Furthermore, staff is encouraged to engage in dialogue of how the principles may be amended over time as this is to be a living document that we update periodically to reflect how our thinking on this critical subject may evolve. The complete version of the Principles of Civility is below:

City of Davis Principles of Civility

The staff of the City of Davis place a high value on respect and civility and we understand that these characteristics are essential to a healthy workplace. We support opportunities for civil discourse and discussion, both within our staff team and in our interactions with the community we serve. We recognize that an atmosphere of incivility and disrespect can have a damaging effect on our workplace and in our service delivery. The staff of the City of Davis take an active interest in the well-being of our organization and the community which we serve. As a staff team we acknowledge that a fundamental tenet of providing quality professional service is our commitment to contributing to an environment of civility by adhering to the following principles:

Be Welcoming and Inclusive. Welcome all people working for the greater good of the community and respect diverse groups and views, even when they are different than your own.

Show Respect. Honor other people and their opinions and ideas, especially in the midst of disagreement; disagree with respect and sometimes agree to disagree; don’t use disrespectful non-verbal behaviors (e.g., eye rolling, loud sighs, finger-snapping).

Speak Kindly. Be positive; refrain from idle complaints and/or pettiness; don’t use language and tone that is aggressive, sarcastic, and/or demeaning.

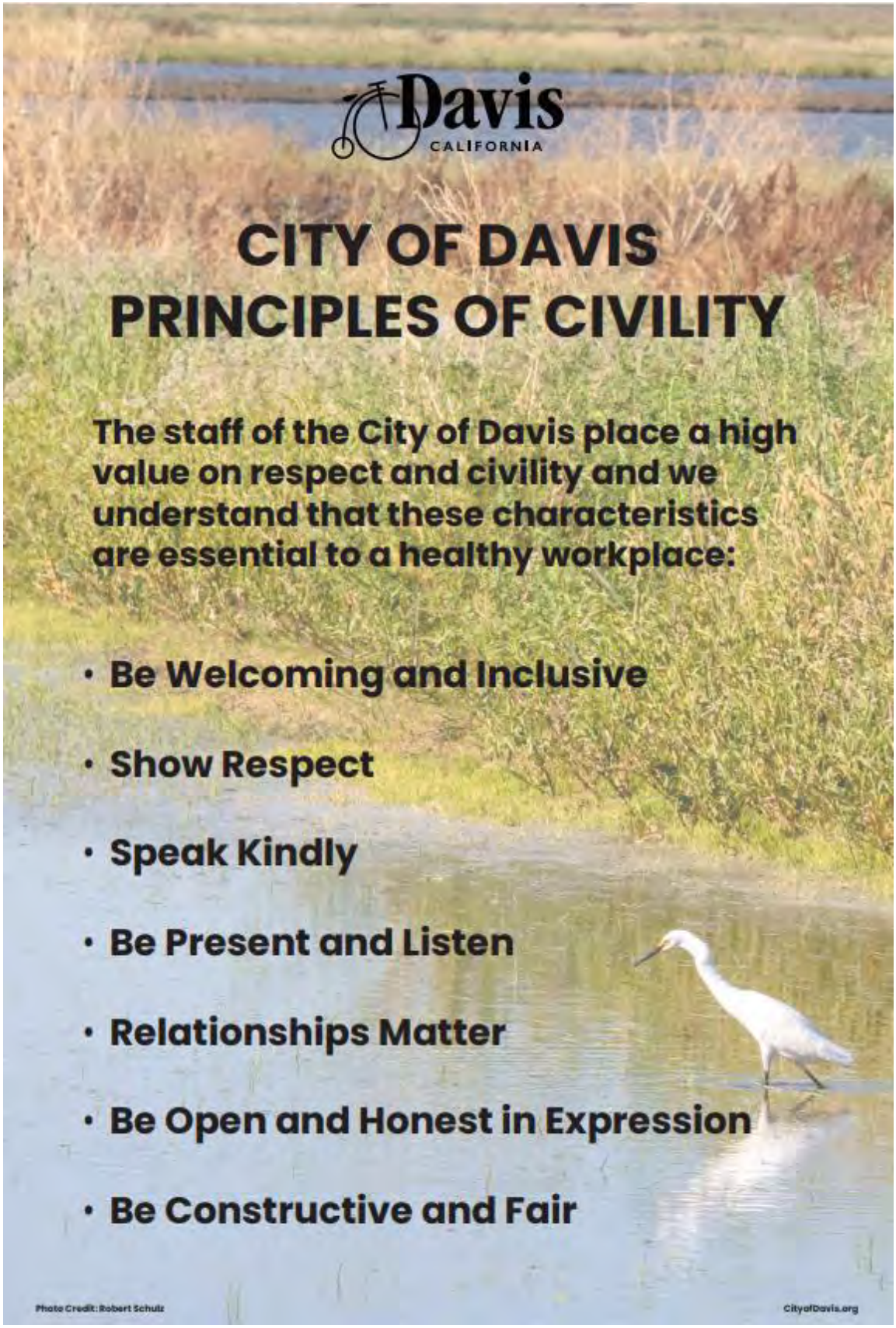
Be Present and Listen. Actively participate in discussions with others. Be attentive and focus on what a person says, rather than who they are, to better understand them and their points of view; don’t interrupt or talk over others who have the floor.

Relationships Matter. Maintaining good relations takes work. Be accountable and take responsibility for your words and actions. Address conflict with sincere dialogue and apologize when needed. Celebrate when things go well.

Be Open and Honest in Expression. Don’t knowingly deceive others and be authentic. Ensure your actions reflect what you are verbally communicating.

Be Constructive and Fair. Look for opportunities to agree or compromise. When disagreeing, stick to the issues and avoid personal attacks. Remain civil even when faced with incivility. Avoid the temptation to rush to judgment without evidence.

The “poster” summary version of the Principles of Civility is below:



Civility in the Workplace Policy
Policy Number 30007.1

Type of Policy: Human Resources

Last Revised: May 26, 2023

Review Date: May 26, 2025

Contact Name: Nicole Field

Contact Title: Director of Human Resources and Affirmative Action

Contact Email: fieldnm@cobleskill.edu

Reason for Policy: The State University of New York at Cobleskill (the College) recognizes that productivity, well-being, and job satisfaction depend on the workplace environment. The College strives to foster a safe, respectful workplace to promote the highest quality performance for all community members through mutual respect, open communication, cooperation, and support. This policy covers all employees and visitors. It also extends beyond the place of work to locations where employees represent the College or perform their work-related duties and responsibilities.

Policy Statement: The State University of New York at Cobleskill (the College) is committed to creating and maintaining a positive work and learning environment built on mutual respect. While it is understood that disagreement will occur in a collegiate setting, open communication, mutual respect for diverse opinions, freedom of expression, and a climate of civility are essential principles that we embrace. The College recognizes and celebrates that employees, students, and visitors bring individual differences and approaches to the workplace based on gender identity and expression, ethnicity, race, culture, religion, national origin, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, military or veteran status, and other factors which create an enriched workplace wherein pluralism is a top priority.

Uncivil Behaviors:
Workplace incivility creates an uncomfortable, and potentially hostile, work environment. These acts of incivility can include:

- Bullying – behavior that intends to intimidate, degrade, coerce, humiliate, or isolate people at work or undermines their reputation or job performance
- General Incivility – rude or discourteous behavior toward an individual or group
- Harassment – behavior directed toward an individual or group with the intent to alarm, manipulate, control or abuse
- Intimidation – threats of imminent or future harm toward an individual or group
- Coercion – pressure to compel the individual to do some act against their will
- Exclusion – situations where a person is socially or physically excluded or disregarded from work-related activities on a regular basis.

- Humiliation – belittling or demeaning others through ridicule or spiteful remarks.

Under no circumstances should a supervisor be uncivil to an employee or vice versa. There is a distinction between incivility and a supervisor being firm in instructing and directing an employee related to job tasks or performance management. Any concerns that an employee is being mistreated by their supervisor must be reported to Human Resources.

Policy Guidelines:

1. All employees, vendors, guests, and visitors to the College are responsible for behaving respectfully and civilly. SUNY Cobleskill employees deserve to be treated with dignity and respect in the workplace and are entitled to a work environment free from intolerance, harassment, or uncivil behaviors. The College will review, investigate, and respond to reports of workplace incivility or other grievous behavior. Employees found violating this policy's provisions shall be subject to discipline up to and including termination of their employment, consistent with the terms and conditions of the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreements if any.
2. Retaliatory action against anyone who has, in good faith, reported incidents of bullying or uncivil behavior or has been involved in reporting, investigating, or responding to alleged uncivil behavior violates this policy. Those found responsible for any retaliatory action will be subject to progressive discipline, up to and including termination, consistent with the terms and conditions of the applicable Collective Bargaining Agreement.

Management Responsibility

Managers, supervisors, and others in positions of authority have a particular responsibility to ensure a healthy workplace environment and promptly address complaints. Therefore, those entrusted with leadership and supervisory responsibilities will:

1. Provide good examples by treating all with courtesy and respect
2. Promote awareness of the policy and complaint procedures
3. Be vigilant for signs of inappropriate behaviors at work through observation and information seeking, and take action to resolve the behavior before it escalates
4. Deal sensitively with employees involved in a complaint, whether as a complainant or alleged aggressor
5. Explain the procedures to be followed if a complaint of inappropriate behavior at work is made
6. Ensure that an employee making a complaint is not victimized for doing so, and seek resolution of such behavior if it occurs
7. Monitor and follow up on the situation after a complaint is made to prevent the recurrence of the behavior.

Employee Responsibility

All members of the College community can contribute to a healthy workplace environment by modeling respectful behavior, speaking out against and reporting uncivil behavior, participating in training, and cooperating with preventative measures.

Training Programs

As part of its commitment to encouraging positive and healthy behaviors, the College has established training programs for all employees and managers. Training is included as part of the new hire orientation and thereafter scheduled regularly for employee and management participation. Training will identify factors that contribute to a civil environment, familiarize participants with responsibilities under this policy, and provide steps for addressing a uncivil incident, including filing an adequate and informed report to the appropriate party.

Complaint Process

This formal complaint process ensures the investigation of allegations of negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors, appropriate documentation, and resolution in a timely manner.

1. Complaints should include the precise details of each incident of negative, aggressive, and alleged inappropriate behaviors, including dates, times, locations, and any witnesses. The Workplace Incivility Form should be utilized to compile all necessary information.
2. Complaints alleging uncivil behavior should be reported to the victim's immediate supervisor. Supervisors must consult with Human Resources and provide a response or update to the complainant within 14 calendar days. If the alleged uncivil or bullying behavior is by the immediate supervisor, the complaint should be reported to the Human Resources Office.
3. Multi-employee complaints within a department or division of the College may be brought directly to the Human Resources Office.

Policy History:

Revision Date	Author/Owner	Description of the action on the revision date
12.16.2022	Nicole Field	Policy Adoption
05.26.2023	Nicole Field	Policy Revisions

Toronto Metropolitan University

University Administrative Policies

Menu +

Respectful Workplace Policy

- **Related Documents:** Sexual Violence Policy (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/sexual-violence-policy/); Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/dhp-policy/); Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct (Policy 61) (https://www.torontomu.ca/senate/course-outline-policies/student-code-of-non-academic-conduct-policy-61/); (https://docs.google.com/document/d/197EtSvG7wSHZIWDZR-MKGsrCzntCww8UEZDwRUqsgs4/edit) Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Guide (https://www.torontomu.ca/facilities-management-development/environmental-health-safety/hazards-at-work/workplace-violence-prevention-response-program/); Guidelines for Managing Real, Potential, and Perceived Conflicts of Interest; (https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/research/documents/ethics/guidelines-for-managing-real-potential-and-perceived-conflicts-of-interest.pdf) Acceptable Use of Information Technology Policy (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/acceptable-use-policy/): Statement of Freedom of Speech (https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/senate/documents/Statement_on_Freedom_of_Speech_May_04_2010.pdf); Housing and Residence Life Community Standards (https://www.torontomu.ca/housing/current-students/community-standards/); Respectful Workplace Procedure (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/respectful-workplace-procedure/), Accessibility Statement of Commitment (https://www.torontomu.ca/accessibility/statement-of-commitment/)
- **Unit Responsible:** Human Resources
- **Owner:** Vice-President, Administration and Operations
- **Approver:** President
- **Date issued:** April 2004
- **Review / Revision Dates:** November 2011, November 2016, September 2024, May 2025, February 2026

I. Purpose

Toronto Metropolitan University is committed to maintaining a respectful working environment where integrity, professionalism, trust, inclusivity and conduct consistent with the University's values and principles are the norm.

A respectful environment is one in which human dignity is valued, diverse perspectives, ideas, and experiences are encouraged, and where all University Community members strive for ongoing improvement. It also includes the fostering of an environment where those University Community members with academic freedom share in open inquiry and the pursuit of knowledge in a positive, respectful manner. Nothing in this Policy shall be construed to impinge upon the academic freedom provisions specified in University collective agreements or policies.

There is a shared responsibility by all members of the University Community to conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the values outlined in this Policy in all interactions, whether in person or virtually, and through verbal, non-verbal or written communication and interpersonal conduct.

This Policy is intended to:

a. Outline the University's values and commitments which encourage workplace practices that foster respect and civility, and to educate University Community members through training about the expectations to uphold these values.

b. Comply with legislative requirements outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01).

c. Together with the Respectful Workplace Procedures (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/respectful-workplace-procedure.html), provide a comprehensive workplace harassment and violence prevention policy and program as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01)

d. Outline a complaint resolution process that is fair, transparent and appropriate in the circumstances for responding to complaints and reports of Disrespectful Behaviours, including alternative resolution and restorative practices.

e. Outline accountability measures for those who are found to have breached this Policy.

II. Values and Guiding Principles

The University values and expects all University Community members to contribute to a respectful environment which is free from harassment and violence. In such an environment:

a. Individuals feel safe, valued, and respected;

b. Individuals listen and respond respectfully to the views and concerns of others, including when there is disagreement;

c. Individuals are accountable for their own behaviours;

d. Individuals can respectfully raise questions and issues without fear of negative consequences;

e. Mental health and psychological safety are prioritized and supported;

f. All University Community members are free to claim their rights under this Policy, to provide evidence, and to participate in an investigation or complaint resolution process, without reprisal or threat of reprisal;

g. Complaints are addressed in a timely and respectful manner;

h. Inappropriate and unacceptable behaviours are addressed in a timely and proportionate manner. Acting and promoting early intervention when workplace issues arise is important to reducing escalation.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging are core Values of the University

The University is committed to equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and belonging. The University is a diverse community, and the University recognizes that efforts to address workplace behaviour and interactions need to be grounded in the understanding that each person's experience will be affected by many factors, including the intersection of their identities, such as sex, gender identity and expression, experiences of colonization, intergenerational trauma, ancestry, race, ethnicity, language, disability, creed, age, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation. The University is committed to ensuring that its prevention efforts, support services, and complaint resolution processes, apply a trauma-informed approach and an anti-oppression framework.

III. Scope and Application

This Policy applies to all faculty and staff, as well as other individuals including Visitors and those required to follow the Policy under terms of contracts or agreements, such as contractors and vendors.

This Policy applies to University Community members who are alleged to have engaged in Disrespectful Behaviours where there is a connection to the University's learning, working and/or living environments, regardless of whether the alleged Disrespectful Behavior takes place on campus, off campus, or in online environments.

Allegations of Workplace Sexual Harassment and Discrimination or Harassment based on the protected grounds outlined in the Ontario Human Rights Code are addressed through the University's Sexual Violence Policy (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/sexual-violence-policy/) and Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy (https://www.torontomu.ca/policies/policy-list/dhp-policy/), respectively.

This Policy and its Procedures outline the process by which the University will address complaints by faculty or staff of Workplace Harassment under the Occupational Health and Safety Act by a student. This process may include appropriate referrals to other University policies that govern student conduct such as the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct. Where a student is also an employee, and the complaint of Workplace Harassment relates to their employment, this Policy will apply. Union members may request representation while exercising their rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

If a conflict arises between the provisions of this Policy and any relevant collective agreement, the terms of the collective agreement prevail unless the collective agreement is in conflict with legislation.

IV. Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy:

"**Alternative Resolution**" means an alternative form of complaint resolution that does not include an investigation or issuing a decision.

"**Civility**" means treating others with dignity, courtesy, respect, politeness, and consideration. Civility requires that even the most critical feedback be delivered respectfully, privately if discussing performance, and courteously.

"**Complaint Resolution Process**" means the process initiated under this Policy when Human Resources receives a complaint or report and determines that it falls within the jurisdiction of this Policy and meets the threshold to proceed through an alternative resolution or investigation process.

"**Disrespectful Behaviour**" means a broad range of comment or conduct, including but not necessarily limited to the types of behaviours listed below. Disrespectful Behaviour must not be confused with legitimate comments and/or feedback from Leaders on the work performance or work-related behaviour of an individual or group. Feedback on work performance or work-related behaviour differs from Disrespectful Behaviour or Workplace Harassment in that feedback is intended to assist employees to improve work performance or the standard of their behaviour.

a. "Rude and Unprofessional Behaviour" encompasses a broad range of behaviours, comments, or conduct including, but not limited to, shouting or swearing, unsolicited and unwelcome conduct, comment (oral or written, including email communication), gestures, actions or contact that cause offense, humiliation, or physical or emotional harm to any individual.

This behaviour can be subtle or overt. It can be intentional or unintentional. It may be a single serious incident or may involve a continuing series of incidents.

Specific actions that are considered disrespectful, such as comment or conduct that a person knows or ought to know would be unwelcome, offensive, embarrassing or hurtful,

rudeness, or display of offensive material 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 inappropriate and rude by others.

Although Disrespectful Behaviour may be subjective or unintentional, this does not excuse the behaviour. Rather, these factors may provide an explanation that can help to resolve a complaint and guide future behaviour.

b. "Workplace Violence" means**:**

i. The exercise of physical force by a person against a worker, in a workplace, that causes or could cause physical injury to the worker;

ii. An attempt to exercise physical force against a worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker;

iii. A statement or behaviour that it is reasonable for a worker to interpret as a threat to exercise physical force against the worker, in a workplace, that could cause physical injury to the worker.

c. "Workplace Harassment" means engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome. A single act could also be sufficient cause to establish Workplace Harassment. Workplace Sexual Harassment is addressed under the University's Sexual Violence Policy and Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy.

d. "Bullying" means verbal comments that are meant to psychologically or 'mentally' hurt or isolate a person in the workplace. Sometimes, Bullying can involve negative physical contact as well. Bullying usually involves repeated incidents or a pattern of behaviour that is intended to intimidate, offend, degrade or humiliate a person or group of people. It has also been described as the assertion of power through aggression. While not an exhaustive list, some examples include:

I. Spreading malicious rumours, gossip, or innuendo;

II. Intentionally excluding, ignoring or isolating someone socially;

III. Withholding necessary information or purposefully giving the wrong information;

IV. Making jokes that are 'obviously offensive' or would reasonably be understood to be offensive, verbally or in writing;

V. Yelling or using profanity; or,

VI. Belittling a person's opinions.

e. "**Cyberbullying**" means bullying or harassment that occurs through the use of electronic communication, including e-mail, text messaging, and social networking. This can involve the posting of comments, rumors, photos or the sending of threatening messages.

f. **"Poisoned Work Environment**" occurs when Disrespectful Behaviors are sufficiently severe and/or pervasive and cause significant and unreasonable interference to the work environment. They may be deemed as creating an intimidating, hostile and offensive workplace environment.

A poisoned environment can interfere with or undermine work performance and can cause emotional and psychological stress. Although a person may not be the target of the behaviours, a person may feel the effects of certain disrespectful behaviours at their place of work.

"**Indigenous Conflict Resolution**" - The University is committed to addressing the legacy of colonization and is actively working towards meaningful truth and reconciliation. TMU's commitment includes Indigenous well-being and working towards an even more inclusive environment. In-line with this commitment, Indigenous peoples (faculty and staff) have the choice to request Indigenous conflict resolution to address conflict in the workplace. Also referred to as restorative justice or transformative justice, Indigenous conflict resolution stems from Indigenous practices and is a set of approaches (which require a time investment) to resolve a complaint that requires individuals to be mindful of their words, actions, decisions and behaviours. Indigenous conflict resolution practices will be guided by Indigenous Peoples with lived experience and may be guided, for example, by the 7 Grandparent Teachings and/or the Great Law of Peace. Additional resources to support the process may include, but not are limited to, Elders, talking circles, and traditional medicines. This form of conflict resolution is for Indigenous faculty and staff.

"Leader" means the person to which an individual reports.

"**Reprisal**" means retaliating, threatening or attempting to retaliate against a person for making a complaint or report of Disrespectful Behaviour, cooperating with or participating in a Complaint Resolution Process or for otherwise pursuing their rights under the Respectful Workplace Policy.

"**Respectful Workplace**" means everyone is treated fairly, differences are acknowledged and valued, communication is open and civil, conflict is addressed early, and there is a culture of empowerment and cooperation.

"**Workplace Sexual Harassment**" means:

a. engaging in a course of vexatious comment or conduct against a worker in a workplace because of sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, where the course of comment or conduct is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome; or

b. making a sexual solicitation or advance where the person making it is in a position to confer, grant or deny a benefit or advancement to the worker and the person knows or ought reasonably to know that the solicitation or advance is unwelcome.

"**University**" means Toronto Metropolitan University.

"**University Community**" means faculty, staff, and other individuals including Visitors, contractors and vendors who are contractually obligated to follow this Policy.

"Visitor" means an individual, invited to the University, or having a role or purpose related to the business of the University.

V. Policy

1. All members of the University Community must act in a manner that is respectful of others. Disrespectful Behaviour is not acceptable and will not be tolerated by the University. It is difficult to list all behaviours that may be deemed as a Disrespectful Behavior in violation of this Policy. Therefore, the expectation is that all members of the University Community conduct themselves in a manner that supports the values and principles of this Policy in all interactions connected to the University's learning, working and/or living environments, whether in person or virtually, and through verbal, non verbal or written communication and other forms of interpersonal conduct.

2. Members of the University Community who hold supervisory or leadership roles shall set examples for others by their own actions and communicate expectations to those under their direction the University's commitment to a Respectful Workplace. This does not take away the responsibility of all University Community members to actively participate in contributing to a climate of respect and dignity towards all.

3. Leaders must take steps to maintain an environment free from Disrespectful Behaviour, and where necessary take appropriate action to preserve or restore a Respectful Workplace when behaviours that are contrary to this Policy are witnessed.

Reporting or addressing concerns

4. Allegations of Disrespectful Behaviour will be taken seriously and the University will respond to and address allegations in a timely, impartial, fair and transparent manner, respecting the confines of confidentiality.

5. Wherever possible, Disrespectful Behaviour should be addressed directly by the individual experiencing the Disrespectful Behaviour, in accordance with the Procedures.

6. The primary responsibility for addressing allegations of Disrespectful Behaviour rests with Leaders who shall be responsible for responding to, and if necessary initiating, a Complaint Resolution Process into the allegation in accordance with the Procedures.

7. Incidents of Disrespectful Behaviour experienced or witnessed by faculty or staff should be reported to their Leader in a timely manner and in accordance with the Procedures. Bystanders play an important role in addressing Disrespectful Behaviour when observed and

are encouraged to either address or report incidents as soon as possible. If the incident is not addressed by the Leader, or there is a concern about conflict of interest, including where an incident involves the individual's Leader, the faculty or staff member should report the incident to Human Resources, their association, or union, in accordance with the Procedures.

8. Where possible, addressing allegations of Disrespectful Behaviour through Alternative Resolution or Indigenous Conflict Resolution rather than a formal investigation is encouraged, in accordance with the Procedures.

9. Incidents of Disrespectful Behaviour experienced or witnessed by members of the University Community who are not faculty or staff should be reported to Human Resources in accordance with the Procedures.

10. This Policy and its Procedures outline the process by which the University will address complaints by faculty or staff of Workplace Harassment under the Occupational Health and Safety Act by a student. This process may include appropriate referrals to other University policies that govern student conduct such as the Student Code of Non-Academic Conduct.

11. All persons involved in an allegation under this Policy (complainants, respondents, and those who assist in the process) shall be treated with respect and fairness. All members of the University Community may make good faith complaints and participate in a complaint resolution or investigation process under this Policy, without reprisal or threat of reprisal. Reprisal or retaliation against anyone making a good faith complaint or participating in a complaint resolution process under this Policy is itself Disrespectful Behavior and a violation of this Policy and will be addressed.

12. Allegations of Disrespectful Behaviours must be dealt with in a confidential manner. Appropriate confidentiality of the complainant(s) and respondent(s) and other information regarding the allegation will be maintained during the process to the extent possible, except as may be necessary for the purpose of investigating the allegation, or as required by law.

Accountability Measures

13. Individuals who are found to be in breach of this Policy will be subject to accountability measures that are reasonable and appropriate in the circumstances, in accordance with the principles of proportionality and progressive discipline. Non-exhaustive examples of general accountability measures include but are not limited to:

a. Counselling and educational programs

b. No contact orders

c. Letter of behavioural expectations

d. Restrictions related to University-related activities

e. Suspension or termination of employment

14. Faculty and staff who make an allegation of Disrespectful Behavior under this Policy and faculty and staff who are the subject of an allegation of Disrespectful Behavior under this Policy will be provided by the University with appropriate communication in writing as to the resolution of the allegation.

False Claims

15. University Community members who intentionally make false, vexatious or unsubstantiated allegations of Disrespectful Behaviours under this Policy may be subject to accountability measures.

VI. Roles and Responsibilities

1. Members of the **University Community** are expected to:

a. Conduct themselves in a manner that upholds the values of this Policy.

b. Make themselves aware of the Policy and their responsibilities under the Policy.

c. Participate in University training programs related to this Policy.

d. Address Disrespectful Behaviours directly, if possible, and as outlined in the Procedures associated with this Policy.

e. Raise concerns about Workplace Harassment and/or Workplace Violence that they have either experienced personally or witnessed.

f. Act in good faith, communicate openly and listen to the perspectives and points of view of others and try to resolve issues informally, where appropriate.

2. **Leaders** are expected to:

a. Lead by example by creating a Respectful Workplace, and not engage in, tolerate or condone any behaviour which is contrary to this Policy.

b. Maintain and promote a positive, productive work environment and act on and address Disrespectful Behaviours in a timely way.

c. Take corrective action, based on the principles of progressive discipline if infractions under the Policy are found.

d. Report incidents or threats of workplace violence as required by the University's Workplace Violence Prevention And Response Program (https://www.torontomu.ca/facilities-management-development/environmental-health-safety/hazards-at-work/workplace-violence-prevention-response-program/).

e. Participate in University-led investigations under this Policy if required.

f. Maintain confidentiality at all times except as necessary as part of the investigation process or as required by law.

3. **Executive Leaders** are expected to:

a. Foster and model a Respectful Workplace climate.

b. Ensure that programs in support of this Policy exist and are updated as required and followed.

c. Demonstrate leadership and commitment to maintaining a safe, professional, and inclusive workplace.

4. **Chief Human Resources Officer** ("CHRO") or designate shall:

a. Update, maintain, oversee, and provide interpretation of this Policy and its Procedures, and administer the Complaint Resolution Process, in conjunction with the appropriate University office where required.

b. Ensure that training opportunities are made available for all faculty, staff and other employees and contractors related to Workplace Harassment, Workplace Violence and Disrespectful Behaviours and the processes for addressing incidents and complaints.

c. Work in close partnership with the Vice-Provost, Faculty Affairs, the Vice-Provost, Students, the Director, Human Rights Services and the Director, Environmental Health and Safety in support of this Policy.

d. Ensure that the appropriate and applicable supports are in place for employees of the University that are affected by complaints raised under this Policy through Workplace Wellbeing Services, human resources benefits, programs and employee and family assistance programs (EFAP).

e. Work in close partnership with Workplace Wellbeing Services, the Vice-Provost, Faculty Affairs (where applicable), and Leaders to support workplace accommodations, if required.

5. **Workplace Wellbeing Services**: Provide care and trauma-informed support to individuals affected by complaints raised under this policy, including connections to resources and workplace accommodation(s) as appropriate

6. **Environmental Health and Safety:**

a. Ensure that the Workplace Violence Prevention and Response Program is maintained and updated as required.

b. Work in close partnership with the CHRO or designate on the interpretation and

application of this policy and in ensuring training opportunities are available.

c. Act as a liaison with the University's Joint Health and Safety Committees as required

7. **Human Rights Services:** Work in close partnership with the CHRO or designate in support of this Policy, including facilitating joint complaint resolution processes where matters may fall within the scope of this Policy and the Sexual Violence Policy and/or Discrimination and Harassment Prevention Policy.

8. **Community Safety and Security:** Provide appropriate services and support through Community Safety and Security such as safety planning, assisting complainants who choose to report to police, referral to other appropriate supports and assisting Human Resources, or other appropriate offices with investigations and application of sanctions where appropriate.

VII. Next Review Date

This Policy is to be reviewed annually as required by the Occupational Health and Safety Act. (https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o01)

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SHRM® BETTER WORKPLACES BETTER WORLD™

WORKPLACE CIVILITY HANDBOOK



OVERVIEW

Civility goes beyond simply making others feel comfortable — it's about building a dynamic, positive, and productive workplace where everyone knows they belong and has an opportunity to succeed. By practicing civility, we create a safe and empathetic environment where individuals are empowered to share their best ideas, confident that they will be heard and valued.



BACKGROUND

The concept of civility in the workplace has its roots in broader societal norms of respect, professionalism, and ethical behavior. Historically, workplace interactions were often hierarchical, with strict authority structures that sometimes limited open dialogue and collaboration. As workplaces have evolved over time, so has an emphasis on creating environments that prioritize mutual respect, inclusivity, and effective communication. Additionally, successful leaders have realized that a respectful work environment facilitates a positive employee experience. Moreover, creating a civil workplace is simply good for business: U.S. organizations collectively lose approximately $2.7 billion per day in reduced productivity and absenteeism due to incivility, according to SHRM research. In addition to those daily costs, incivility may also be driving workers to leave their jobs.

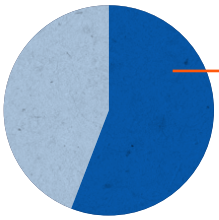
BUSINESS CASE

A respectful workplace culture is essential for a thriving organization. When colleagues, customers, and clients are treated with civility, a positive atmosphere is created, boosting employee morale and engagement. This, in turn, fosters increased collaboration and productivity while reducing absenteeism. The alternative — an uncivil workplace — can lead to significant costs. High turnover, often a consequence of incivility, is expensive, with replacement costs potentially reaching three times the departing employee's salary. According to the *SHRM Benchmarking: Talent Access Report*, the average time to fill a vacant position is 54 days, so turnover also disrupts productivity and negatively impacts remaining employees. Investing in a civil workplace is a far more effective strategy than dealing with the fallout of incivility.

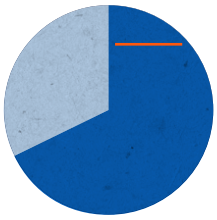
RESEARCH

According to the SHRM Q1 2025 Civility Index, incivility in the workplace continues to rise. Since the release of SHRM's original index at the start of 2024, there has been a 30% increase in reported instances of incivility. Furthermore, compared to Q1 2024, reports of workplace incivility stemming from differences in political viewpoints have surged by 51%.

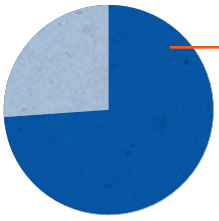
STATISTICS



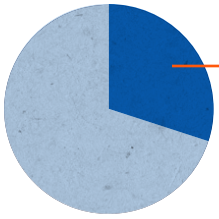
56%
of daily acts of incivility occur in the workplace.



68%
of workers believe that their manager cares more about business objectives than how people are treated in the workplace.



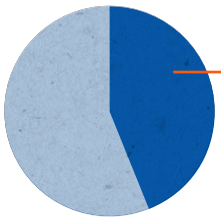
74%
of workers agree that their manager or supervisor could have done more to prevent incivility at work.



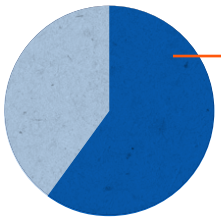
30%
of workers say they reported an incident of incivility to HR or to a manager.

OVER 50% of U.S. workers believe our society is uncivil.

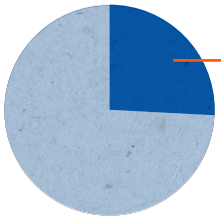
LOOKING FORWARD



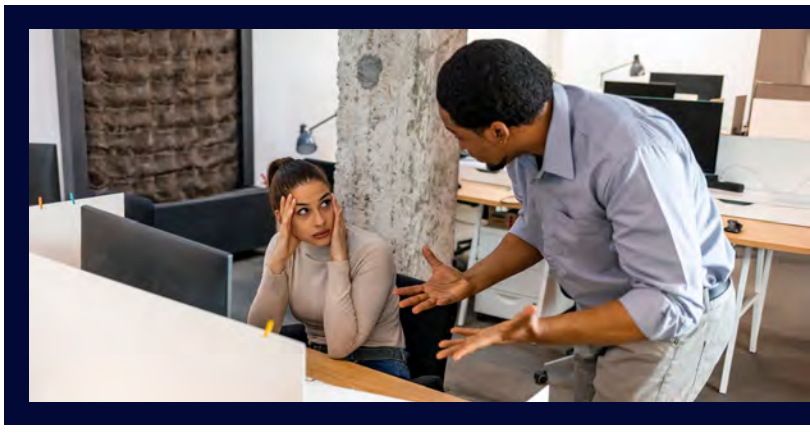
44%
of U.S. workers believe incivility in the U.S. will worsen in 2025.



60%
of U.S. workers believe it's important or very important for their company to make efforts to address civil discourse at work in 2025.



26%
of U.S. workers say it's likely they will leave their job in 2025 because of incivility.



Source:
SHRM Q1 2025 Civility Index, March 2025.

THE EMPLOYER'S ROLE

As a business leader, you wield considerable influence within your organization. When you model civility, you establish an expectation of open, productive dialogue in the workplace, even during difficult conversations. The Q3 2024 SHRM Civility Index found that by setting an example of what civility looks like in action, you can improve the culture of your organization and create lasting business benefits, including greater productivity and staff retention. According to SHRM's *The State of Global Workplace Culture in 2023* report, employees at organizations with equitable leadership practices, including the appreciation of employees' perspectives, were 19 times more likely to rate the organization's culture as good or excellent.

At its core, civility is about treating others with respect and kindness, even in challenging situations. Civility goes beyond the simple politeness of refraining from personal attacks or disrespectful behavior. It involves listening actively and acknowledging diverse perspectives so that others feel fully heard. By modeling these behaviors, you can set standards for everyone else to follow and even increase your standing within the organization as you develop a reputation for consensus building among your fellow leaders.

According to the SHRM Q4 2024 Civility Index, workers continue to identify gaps in a crucial element of preventing and managing incivility in the workplace: the role of managers and supervisors. As in previous quarters, many U.S. workers who personally experienced or witnessed incivility at work said managers may be creating work environments that breed incivility.



More than two-thirds of U.S. workers (69%) said they expect their organization to try to address civil discourse at work. It's critical for executives and senior leaders to create and execute strategic initiatives that directly address incivility in the workplace and clearly define what behavior is and is not acceptable. They must lead by example and exhibit civil behavior while holding people managers and employees accountable for their behavior and actions.

SHRM research revealed that the most common responses to workplace incivility were workers removing themselves from the uncivil situation (53%) or simply ignoring the incivility (50%). It's important to encourage employees and people managers to reinforce a culture of civility and share instances of incivility with their leaders and HR representatives.

HR representatives can help organizational leaders understand the importance of a civil culture and the costs associated with not intentionally making this a priority. HR can also help leaders define what constitutes civil behavior. By ensuring everyone has a similar understanding of what constitutes civil and uncivil behavior, your team can communicate more effectively and navigate disagreements constructively.



THE IMPORTANCE OF ALIGNING CIVILITY WITH BUSINESS STRATEGY

"Fostering civility in the workplace is not just about politeness — it's a strategic business imperative," SHRM President and Chief Executive Officer Johnny C. Taylor, Jr., SHRM-SCP, wrote in *U.S. News & World Report*. "Companies that prioritize civility are more likely to attract and retain top talent, foster innovation, and achieve long-term success. In doing so, they protect their employees and their reputation for the customers, patients, or clients they serve."

Resource: How to Promote Civility in the Workplace

SHRM research examined which practices were consistently associated with positive workplace culture perceptions and how those practices could be grouped to create actionable areas for employers. The research found five dimensions that influence workplace culture perceptions. These dimensions are summarized in SHRM's Global Workplace Culture Model.

Equitable Leadership Practices was by far the most influential dimension. When equity is high, employees are 19 times more likely to rate their culture as good or excellent.

SHRM research found that the top 10 drivers of a positive workplace culture belong to the **Equitable Leadership Practices, Career Fulfillment,** and **Good Manager Communication** dimensions. Employers can identify their areas of weakness among these 10 drivers to determine which actions to target first.

TOP 10 DRIVERS
of positive workplace culture:

1. Transparent communication from leadership.
2. Fair performance evaluations.
3. Employees' pride in their work.
4. Active solicitation of employee feedback by the organization.
5. Employees can trust what the manager says.
6. Appreciation of employees' unique backgrounds, perspectives, and experiences.
7. Ability to make a complaint about a leader without punishment.
8. A meaningful career.
9. Manager seeks employee input before making decisions.
10. Opportunities for career growth.

BUILDING YOUR ROAD MAP TO A CULTURE OF CIVILITY

1. Identify Future State

To create a culture of civility and opportunity, you must first define what that means to you and your organization. It's important to understand that organizations may create a culture of civility by using different descriptors. Granted, many may be the same; however, you need to ensure that the path you set out on is the right one for your organization.

Secondly, you need to define your current culture. Then, plan your strategy on measuring and communicating progress and celebrating your successes.

The culture journey is continuous. You must remain vigilant about protecting and maintaining your desired culture. This means every new hire is critical. Do not hire just to fill a spot. You want to hire for cultural fit. Gerald Bell of the Bell Leadership Institute has found that when a person is, at minimum, an 80% fit for culture, they will succeed. If they are less than an 80% fit, they will fail.

The same holds true for promotions. Is the person a great fit to be a people manager and a great fit for your desired culture? If they are not, do not promote them — consider if training is needed. If so, provide the training and development before promoting the person. This is when having a succession plan or ready promotion list is critical.

Who will help you in being protectors of your culture? You will need everyone in the organization. Consider them "Guardians of the Culture." Are you ready to get started?

Steps to identify what you want your culture to become:

- Speak with your CEO. Understand their needs and wants for your culture. This is the first step in beginning to define your desired culture. The eight elements of culture are: language, beliefs, values, norms, customs, traditions, symbols, and artifacts. These components define how individuals interact and share their experiences. Culture is not necessarily your guiding principles or core values, but your guiding principles and core values help steer you toward your desired culture and thus should be aligned.

- When meeting with the CEO, if you have a hard time getting started, ask this question: "I'd like to set you up on a date with a company. What characteristics must the company have, and what must they not have?" Example: "I'm looking for someone (a company) who is empathetic, super smart, results-oriented, curious, trustworthy, driven, and a lot of fun." Then, what must the company not be? Example: "I do not want someone (a company) that sits back and waits for anything — instead, they make it happen. I don't want someone who's not respectful to all people, who condemns cutting-edge technology and tools, and who is highly egotistical." This can be a great opener to get dialogue going.

- What you and the CEO determine will be the "desired" state to use as a starting point. Remember, there are cultures in every work group — but this focus begins at the top.

Next Steps

Have a strategic planning session with your executive team. Share the desired state that you and the CEO developed. Discuss, push back, add, and then agree. If all do not agree, it's important to understand where the disconnect is. Will this disagreement be a derailer? If so, you must resolve this before going to the next step.

Keep reminding all stakeholders that what you're describing is not the current culture, but the desired culture. Write down words to describe your desired culture and how you define them. Ideally, you should select six or fewer words or phrases.



HOW DO YOU DEFINE YOUR IDEAL WORKPLACE CULTURE?

Innovative — We think outside the box and allow failure in order to be able to grow better.

Trustworthy and ethical — We do the right thing even if it may be detrimental to ourselves, we are our word, and we place a high value on our employees' integrity. Trust does not go one way. Employers need to place trust in their employees and their work and need to trust them to get the job done right. Those employees then need to trust that the employer will protect them and have their best interests at heart.

Focused on learning — We continuously learn and are hungry to learn more.

Fun — We like to work hard, delivering results while we're enjoying ourselves.

Smart and curious — We encourage asking "why." We push through the limits or boundaries; we seek to do things better even if we fail.

Fiscally responsible — We're judicious in where and how we spend the company's money, ensuring all expenditures help us achieve our mission and goals.

Empathetic — We experience what you experience and are with you for every step of the journey. You are not alone. We engage in open communication and create deep relationships in which we can speak our mind without consequences.

Note: Not all words may be viewed as positive, but it's important to be true to what the desired state is. For example, "relentless" may sound exhausting and unbalanced, but when describing the desired state, it can signify a culture that is determined, ambitious, and always striving for excellence.

Now you have your desired state and have defined what you want your culture to be.

Some organizations elect to hire a consultant to assist with this process. Many organizations, though, do not have the resources to do so or are not willing to pay an external source for this work. Again, this is a discussion you will need to have with your CEO upfront.

2. Define Current State

You will need a second strategic planning session for the executive team to assess your current culture (company, unit, division, department, sub-department). Often, it helps to break these into two meetings: desired and current. The process of defining your current culture is similar to identifying your desired culture. Consider asking the following questions:

- Who is a hero or someone that all leaders in the organization admire and look up to — at any level or role in the organization? Why? (You are seeking characteristic descriptors.)

- Who are the offenders or disruptors of the organization? Why? Or, ask what the cause of past terminations was (remember to not get into highly confidential information).

It may be easier to get the group started by having them write their ideas on sticky notes (one color for heroes and one color for villains) and place them on a wall or flipchart. You can also use a virtual cloud. Once you have completed this exercise, discuss each word or phrase as a team. Come to an agreement about whether it is a hero characteristic or a villain characteristic.

Because this is your current culture, it is more than likely that there will be a gap between the current and desired states. Some of your current leaders may not fit the desired state.



3. Accountability

You must hold all leaders accountable to live the new culture and ensure that it is protected. It's also important to hold all employees accountable. Many find that accountability of living and promoting the culture is best handled when it is part of the formal performance review process. Many companies no longer conduct annual reviews and instead do reviews monthly, quarterly, or at other frequencies. Think about how you will enforce your culture and hold people accountable. This is a journey and one that must be front and center each and every day for each and every person.

4. Metrics

Once you have identified what you want your culture norms to be, you will next determine a baseline or starting benchmark. This can be done through employee surveys, focus groups, and other feedback mechanisms that assess employees' perceptions of their workplace's culture.

- **Surveys:** Employee surveys are an excellent tool for gathering valuable feedback and establishing a baseline for workplace conditions. HR can begin by conducting an initial survey, followed by periodic surveys to reassess progress — for example, at three months, six months, nine months, and one year. Once a full year's baseline is set, surveys can be conducted every six months to maintain continuity. The key to effective surveys is to focus on three to five well-crafted questions that provide the critical insights needed for meaningful action. Some example prompts include:
  - *"At my company, I can say what I feel without fear of negative consequences."*
  - *"People in my company treat each other with kindness and respect."*
  - *"I'm treated fairly without regard to ethnicity, race, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity."*
  - *"Leaders here would take a stand if someone were to behave with bias or in an offensive manner."*
  - *"In the past X months, I have observed or personally experienced verbal abuse or behaviors that discourage individuals from speaking up."*
  - *"In the past X months, I have witnessed rude or disrespectful behavior on the basis of ethnicity, race, sex, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender identity."*

- **Engagement Surveys:** Employers may incorporate additional questions into their regular engagement surveys instead of conducting a standalone employee survey. At the outset of the culture change process — or if no engagement survey has been completed in the past six months — distribute a survey with these added questions.

Follow up with another survey approximately one year after implementing the culture changes to measure progress.

Surveys can be distributed electronically or via pen and paper. Many organizations have transitioned to electronic surveys to streamline data collection and accelerate results. SHRM offers an employee engagement survey and also provides a directory of companies that offer online survey services.



- **Focus Groups:** Focus groups are another valuable tool for benchmarking the current workplace culture. Employers can select a random sample of employees to discuss their perceptions of civil and uncivil behaviors in the workplace. Begin by allowing team members to share their individual perspectives. Then, facilitate an open dialogue to identify areas of agreement and disagreement.

Ensure the discussion is participatory, creating an environment in which all voices are heard. By the conclusion of the session, aim to establish a shared understanding of civility and its importance in the workplace. The Civil Conversations kit, a free resource created in partnership with SHRM and Rising Team, can help you lead a 30- to 60-minute team activity designed to foster this dialogue.

Now that you have established your current culture, what you want your desired culture to be, your baseline benchmark, and how you will determine progress, you need to convey that information to management and staff. Your next steps are:

1. **Establish policies and straightforward guidelines.**
   Develop clear, companywide policies that outline expectations for respectful behavior and define standards for workplace civility. If your organization has existing policies in place, consider updating them to reflect current societal concerns.

2. **Provide training for managers and supervisors.**
   Equip managers with the tools and training necessary to address difficult conversations, support employees who experience acts of incivility, and handle transgressions consistently and fairly. Encourage managers to keep open-door policies to foster an environment in which employees feel comfortable voicing concerns. This will enable managers to address individual acts of incivility before they escalate into larger workplace culture issues.

3. **Empower employees with resources.**
   Ensure that your employees know how to report acts of incivility and access HR for support. Communicating these processes and proactively providing employees with resources demonstrates your company's commitment to fostering a respectful work environment and can enhance employees' sense of belonging and job satisfaction.

   See The Cost of Incivility: Addressing Workplace Challenges into 2025



5. Communication

Introduction to Effective Communication and Civility in the Workplace

Effective communication is a cornerstone of organizational success, and leaders play a critical role in fostering an environment where civility thrives. It's not simply about sharing information, it's about setting a tone that encourages mutual respect, trust, and inclusivity. Leaders who communicate with civility create workplaces where all employees feel heard, valued, and empowered to contribute. Here are some key points for leaders striving to promote civility through communication:

- **Impact of Civil Communication:** Effective communication rooted in civility enhances employee morale, engagement, and understanding. Leaders who communicate respectfully create an environment where everyone feels like they belong, which boosts productivity and fosters a sense of shared purpose. A civil workplace promotes an open exchange of ideas in which employees feel comfortable expressing themselves without fear of disrespect.

- **Leaders Setting the Tone:** Leaders set the tone for communication in the workplace. By modeling respectful, open communication, leaders promote civility and inclusivity across the organization. Clear, consistent communication, aligned with organizational values, fosters trust and ensures that all employees are on the same page. When leaders prioritize civility, it becomes embedded in the culture, reinforcing respect throughout the organization.

- **Two-Way Communication and Civility:** Communication is a two-way street. Leaders should not only share information but also actively listen to their employees. By paying attention to concerns, feedback, and suggestions, leaders create a culture of civility in which employees feel valued and understood. Active listening prevents misunderstandings and addresses concerns before they escalate, reinforcing trust and fostering a positive workplace environment.



- **Measuring the Impact of Communication:** Leaders should regularly assess how their communication is received and whether it fosters a civil, respectful atmosphere. Feedback and surveys can help gauge the effectiveness of messages and ensure they're aligned with the organization's goals of inclusivity and respect. This feedback loop enables leaders to refine their communication strategies to ensure they're creating an environment where civility thrives.

- **Tailoring Communication to Audiences:** Effective communication requires leaders to adapt their message to the audience. Whether delivering information through meetings, emails, or newsletters, leaders must consider how different employees receive and process messages. By selecting the appropriate communication method and being mindful of tone, leaders can ensure that their messages are not only clear but also respectful and considerate of diverse perspectives.

- **Training for Civility in Communication:** Leaders must be equipped with the skills needed to communicate respectfully and effectively. Providing communication training that emphasizes civility and respect enables leaders to handle difficult conversations with sensitivity and foster a more empathetic work environment. Training also teaches leaders how to respond to conflicts or misunderstandings in a way that upholds the principles of respect and fairness.

- **Responding to Employee Concerns:** When employees voice concerns, it's essential that leaders respond in a timely, respectful, and thoughtful manner. Addressing issues promptly shows that leaders value employee input and are committed to maintaining a civil workplace. This responsiveness fosters trust and demonstrates that leadership takes employee well-being seriously.

- **Creating Opportunity for All:** Leaders must ensure that their communication practices respect the diverse backgrounds of their employees. Being aware of cultural, individual, and generational differences allows leaders to communicate messages that promote civility and inclusivity at all levels of the organization. Leaders who prioritize empathy in their communication foster an environment in which all employees feel respected and valued.

By embedding these principles into daily leadership practices, leaders can create a workplace culture rooted in civility, respect, and collaboration. This culture not only improves employee satisfaction but also drives organizational success by fostering a workplace where every individual is empowered to contribute to the shared goals of the organization.

Resource: Managing Organizational Communication toolkit



6. Technology

Determine what technology is needed and how to use it. Will you have a dashboard, an app, a pulse meter, or something else? How and what will you measure? Then, how and what will you communicate to the executive team, people managers, and employees?

7. Celebrating Success

As you progress on the journey, it's important to celebrate the successful steps. Little celebrations go a long way on this journey.

8. Review and Reset

Establishing benchmarks and reset meetings is another important part of this journey. Once you have implemented your plan, quarterly reset meetings are very helpful. This allows you to track progress, determine where new challenges have arisen, and develop additional action steps needed to ensure success.

Most of all, embrace and enjoy the journey.



CIVILITY CULTURE CHECKLIST

✓	Key Element	Who Leads	Who's Involved	Comments
☐	Identify Future State	HR	CEO/Owner/ President	
☐	Define Current State	HR	Senior Leadership Team/Executive Team	
☐	Accountability	HR	Senior Leadership Team/Executive Team/People Managers	
☐	Metrics	HR	Senior Leadership Team/Executive Team	
☐	Communications	HR	Communications Team/Marketing Team	
☐	Technology	HR	IT Team	
☐	Celebrating Success	CEO/Owner/ President/HR	All	
☐	Review and Reset	HR	Senior Leadership Team/Executive Team	

THE PATH FORWARD

Now you understand the vital role a culture of civility plays in the workplace. Incivility is not merely an interpersonal issue — it carries substantial business consequences, including decreased productivity, higher turnover, and diminished employee engagement. The data is clear: Organizations that prioritize civility not only cultivate a more respectful environment but also experience tangible benefits in employee retention, collaboration, and overall workplace satisfaction.



Leaders play a crucial role in setting the standard for civility, and their commitment to modeling and enforcing respectful behavior is instrumental in driving meaningful cultural change. By aligning civility initiatives with business strategies, organizations can create workplaces that value transparency, fairness, and open communication.

The journey toward a more civil workplace is continuous. Establishing clear policies, providing leadership training, leveraging technology for measurement, and fostering open dialogue are essential steps in this process. Moreover, organizations must regularly assess and recalibrate their efforts, ensuring that civility remains a foundational pillar of their workplace culture.

By making civility a priority, organizations not only enhance employee well-being but also strengthen their reputations and position themselves for long-term success. A commitment to respect and inclusivity is not just a moral imperative — it's a strategic business necessity that benefits employees, leaders, and the organization as a whole.

RESOURCES

Tools

Civility Starter Kit
shrm.org/topics-tools/topics/civility

SHRM Employee Survey Sample Form
shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/forms/employee-survey-job-satisfaction

Civil Conversations kit
https://app.risingteam.com/shrm-24

SHRM Employment Engagement Survey
shrm.org/business-solutions/partner-products/employee-engagement-survey-service

Managing Organizational Communication Toolkit
shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/toolkits/managing-organizational-communication

Political Conversations Playbook
https://flipbooks.shrm.org/view/1041257121/

Insights

The Cost of Incivility: Addressing Workplace Challenges into 2025
shrm.org/enterprise-solutions/insights/cost-of-incivility-addressing-workplace-challenges-into-2025

How to Promote Civility in the Workplace
shrm.org/topics-tools/tools/how-to-guides/how-to-promote-civility-in-the-workplace

4 Proactive Strategies to Combat Workplace Incivility
shrm.org/topics-tools/news/employee-relations/4-proactive-strategies-to-combat-workplace-incivility

Data

SHRM Benchmarking: Talent Access Report
shrm.org/topics-tools/research/shrm-benchmarking

SHRM Civility Index
shrm.org/topics-tools/topics/civility

The State of Global Workplace Culture in 2023
shrm.org/topics-tools/news/employee-relations/global-workplace-culture-research

This guide was developed and compiled by SHRM Community Experience.

Policy to Foster Civility and Support a Healthy Academic Work Environment

Cynthia M. Clark, PhD, RN, ANEF, FAAN; and Katy Ritter, MS, JD

ABSTRACT

Background: Incivility in academic workplaces can have detrimental effects on individuals, teams, departments, and the campus community at large. Alternately, healthy academic workplaces generate heightened levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and morale. **Method:** This article describes the development and implementation of a comprehensive, legally defensible policy related to workplace civility and the establishment of a healthy academic work environment. **Results:** A detailed policy exemplar is included to provide a structure for fostering a healthy academic work environment, a fair, consistent, confidential procedure for defining and addressing workplace incivility, a mechanism for reporting and subsequent investigation of uncivil acts if indicated, and ways to foster civility and respectful workplace behavior. **Conclusion:** The authors detail a step-by-step procedure and an incremental approach to address workplace incivility and reward policy adherence. [*J Nurs Educ.* 2018;57(6):325-331.]

Dr. Clark is Professor Emeritus, School of Nursing, and Ms. Ritter is Director, Office of Technology Transfer, Division of Research and Economic Development, Boise State University, Boise, Idaho.

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All members of a campus community deserve a healthy academic work environment where each member is valued, treated with dignity and respect, and encouraged to engage in lively debate, spirited discussion, and meaningful discourse free from discrimination, harassment, and intimidation. Healthy workplaces generate heightened levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and morale. The American Psychological Association (APA, 2015) defines psychologically healthy workplaces according to five major categories, including employee involvement; work–life balance; employee growth and development; health and safety; and employee recognition. According to the APA, psychologically healthy workplaces benefit from improved work quality and productivity, lower absenteeism, employee engagement, less turnover, and better customer service ratings.

Similarly, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (2016) recognizes colleges and universities for workplace excellence in 12 categories, including collaborative governance; compensation and benefits; confidence in senior leadership; diversity; facilities, workspace, and security; job satisfaction; professional/career development; respect and appreciation; supervisor or department chair relationship; teaching environment; tenure clarity in process; and work–life balance. Each year, these criteria are used to identify colleges and universities determined by faculty, staff, and college administrators to be great places to work.

In 2006, the National League for Nursing (NLN, 2006) developed the Healthful Work Environment Tool Kit to provide a measurement for academic workplace assessment and a platform for discussion of how nursing faculty and administrators can work together to build healthy academic nursing workplaces. The tool kit included nine elements that constitute a healthy academic work environment, including salaries; benefits; workload; collegial environment; role preparation and professional development; scholarship; institutional support; marketing and recognition; and leadership. Clark (2017) suggested three additional elements, including establishing and committing to a shared vision, mission, values, and norms; engaging in effective communication and constructive conflict negotiation; and fostering individual, team, and organizational civility.

Although there are multiple dimensions to the establishment and sustainment of healthy work environments, this article focuses on the construct of civility that corresponds with the APA category of employee recognition; *The Chronicle of Higher Education* category of respect and appreciation; and the NLN category of collegial environment. The purpose of this article is threefold: (a) to discuss the importance of civility in the workplace; (b) to provide a legal framework for policy development; and (c) to present an exemplar policy to promote civility in the workplace and a guide to address workplace incivility.

Civility in the workplace involves expressing respect for others while honoring differences and treating one another with dignity and respect (Emry & Holmes, 2005; Guinness, 2008), which requires time, presence, engagement, and intention to seek common ground (Clark & Carnosso, 2008). Put more succinctly, Maxey (2011) defined civility as "those actions and behaviors that support the dignity of another" (p. 36). Some reasons for the perceived rise of incivility in higher education include doing more with less, economic uncertainty, increase in technology and online learning modalities, student and faculty diversity, unmanageable or unreasonable workloads, power and structural imbalances, and juggling competing demands related to work, family, and life responsibilities (Cipriano, 2011; Clark, 2013; Clark, Olender, Kenski, & Cardoni, 2013). It is important to note that being civil and collegial does not mean that we all agree, nor does it "imply mindless conformity or absence of dissent. Rather, operationalizing collegiality [civility] as either a noun or adjective enhances productive dissent, a basic tenet of the academy" (Cipriano, 2011, p. 15).

Because all members of the campus community have a responsibility to foster social discourse, questioning, and critical argument, each must commit to creating safe spaces for the free expression of diverse and differing points of view, opinions, and beliefs. This requires taking action not only to promote civility but to address incidents of incivility—defined by Clark (2017) as the display of a range of rude or disrespectful behaviors, failing to take action when action is warranted, or both. These behaviors and inactions may result in psychological or physiological distress for the people involved and, if left unaddressed, may worsen or progress into threatening situations. Acts of incivility in the academic workplace can take various forms, including actions that we do, such as using profanity and vulgar language, making demeaning or disparaging remarks, or engaging in threatening or intimidating behavior. Incivility also includes actions that we do not do, such as failing to share important information, refusing to assist a colleague or participate in the work of the department, or excluding and marginalizing others. These behaviors, especially when prolonged over time, can have lasting and harmful effects on individuals, teams, and the academic workplace.

THE IMPACT OF WORKPLACE INCIVILITY

The impact of workplace incivility can be grave. Studies reveal (Pearson & Porath, 2009; Porath & Pearson, 2013) that workers on the receiving end of incivility reported a decrease in work effort, time spent working, and quality of work; time lost worrying about uncivil encounters; decline in performance and commitment to the organization; and taking frustration out on others. According to the Workplace Bullying Institute (2017), being the target of workplace bullying may also affect life outside the work setting, such as becoming physically ill leading up to the start of the work week; obsessing about work while at home or on vacation; suffering from physical and mental health problems; days off spent exhausted and lifeless; and favorite activities are no longer enjoyable. In some cases, employees do not report incidents of incivility and many leave the workplace without informing supervisors of their true reason for leaving. As a result, turnover costs accumulate quickly, and when compounded by direct and indirect costs of managing incivility, together they create a significant financial burden (Porath, 2016). Given the negative consequences and high costs of workplace incivility, it is imperative for academic institutions to develop, implement, and broadly disseminate polices to foster civility that support a healthy academic work environment.

NEED FOR POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Policy development must ensure strict confidentiality because employees are often reluctant to report acts of incivility due to worry over losing their job, fear of retaliation, and an overall lack of information and clarity about how to address the problem (Longo, 2010). In some cases, incivility has gone unaddressed for so long that these behaviors have become ingrained into the culture of an organization, and some employees believe that nothing can be done to effectively address the problem (Longo, 2010). Therefore, policy development and implementation are critical to the health of academic workplaces. To be effective, policies should be specific, extend beyond simply defining uncivil behavior, and include a clear plan for addressing incivility. Policies must ensure fairness, consistency, and confidentiality, and include an incremental disciplinary approach when applicable—except in cases of egregious misconduct. In addition, the policies must be comprehensive, be easily accessible, and include specific step-by-step procedures (Clark, 2017).

CURRENT PROTECTIVE LAWS FALL SHORT

Common law and statutory remedies generally fail to address bullying situations in the workplace. Conduct disparate from sexual harassment or other forms of protected-class discrimination normally fail to rise to the level of actionable liability, such as intentional infliction of emotional distress (IIED). The tort of IIED has four elements: (a) the defendant must act intentionally or recklessly; (b) the defendant's conduct must be extreme and outrageous; and (c) the conduct must be the cause (d) of severe emotional distress ("Intentional infliction of emotional distress," n.d.). In addition, in many states, workers' compensation statutes preempt claims for intentional infliction of emotional distress and other violations of laws that may result from bullying situations. As such, employees who are subject to abusive conduct would highly benefit from internal policies that proscribe procedures for reporting those who partake in such

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activities, as well as penalties to provide redress for the harm inflicted on them.

For example, in one western state, workers' compensation laws cover injuries "caused by an accident arising out of and in the course of any employment covered by the worker's compensation law" (Worker's Compensation and Related Laws, 2016). *Accident* means an unexpected, undesigned, and unlooked-for mishap, or untoward event, connected with the industry in which it occurs, and which can be reasonably located as to time when and place where it occurred, causing an injury (Worker's Compensation and Related Laws, 2016). *Injury* and *personal injury* include only an injury caused by an accident that results in violence to the physical structure of the body. These terms do not include an occupational disease (i.e., any chronic ailment that occurs as a result of work) and only include nonoccupational diseases that result directly from an injury (Worker's Compensation and Related Laws, 2016).

Emotional distress, such as the type of distress caused by workplace bullying, can be triggered by repetitive occurrences in the office, especially uncivil and intimidating incidents. When repeated incidents or the nature of the job cause emotional distress, a distinct accident has not occurred. "Instead, workers' compensation preemption will depend on whether the workplace experience constitutes a compensable occupational disease. The legal standard is whether the mental illness or injury was due to stresses or conditions different from those borne by the general public" (Pitillo v. NC Department of Environmental Health & Natural Resources, as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 3).

Further, some states have rejected coverage of all psychological injuries when they lack a physical cause—so called *mental-mental* injuries; an injury or disease is not compensable if it was "solely caused by nonphysical means" and "did not result in any physical injury or disease" (Workers' Compensation W. Va. Code, as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 4). Similarly, one eastern state's workers' compensation law excludes from the definition of *personal injury* a mention of emotional impairment "unless such impairment arises from a physical injury or occupational disease" (Bennett v. Beiersdorf, Inc., as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 4).

Actions based on workplace abuse will also avoid workers' compensation preemption if they are brought as intentional torts, such as IIED (Pleasant v. Johnson, as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 4; i.e., intentional injuries are not preempted). Hogan v. Forsyth Country Club Co. (as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 4) held that IIED claims are not preempted because the "essence of [IIED] is non-physical; the injuries alleged by plaintiffs do not involve physical injuries resulting in disability."

Nonetheless, claims for intentional infliction of emotional distress have not been very successful when they are not related to claims for sexual harassment: "it is extremely rare to find conduct in the employment context that will rise to the level of outrageousness necessary to support a claim" of IIED (Thomas v. N. Telecom, Inc., as cited in Copeley, 2015, p. 4). Further, the Hogan v. Forsyth Country Club Co. court found conduct "not sufficiently outrageous where supervisors screamed and shouted at a plaintiff, called her names, interfered with her supervision of others, and refused to grant a plaintiff pregnancy leave." Based on these cases and observations, clearly there is a need for policies and legal remedies that address workplace incivility, bullying, and harassment, without regard to protected class status.

CURRENT EFFORTS FOR REDRESS: THE HEALTHY WORKPLACE BILL

In the early 2000s, Suffolk University Professor of Law David Yamada drafted the text of the Healthy Workplace Bill (HWB). The HWB has been presented in more than half of the United States, with more than 100 versions, and has been sponsored by more than 400 legislators. Although there have been partial victories in Utah, California, and Tennessee, no state has yet to pass the full version of the HWB that holds employers accountable for fostering an abusive work environment (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014b).

According to the HWB (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2017), *workplace bullying* is defined as the "repeated, health-harming mistreatment of one or more persons (the targets) by one or more perpetrators: abusive conduct that takes one or more of the following forms: verbal abuse, or threatening, intimidating or humiliating behaviors (including nonverbal), or work interference—sabotage—which prevents work from getting done, or some combination of one or more" (para. 1). In a 2014 national survey, 27% of Americans have suffered abusive conduct at work, another 21% have witnessed it, and 72% are aware that workplace bullying happens (Workplace Bullying Institute, 2014a).

The HWB provides benefits to both employers and employees. For the former, the bill specifically defines an *abusive work environment* (which is a high standard for misconduct); requires proof of health harm by licensed health or mental health professionals; protects conscientious employers from vicarious liability risk when internal correction and prevention mechanisms are in effect; gives employers the reason to terminate or sanction offenders; requires plaintiffs to use private attorneys; and plugs the gaps in current state and federal civil rights protections (Workplace Bullying Institute, n.d.). For harmed employees, the HWB holds the employer accountable; allows an employee to sue the perpetrator as an individual; provides an avenue for legal remedies for health-harming cruelty at work; allows for restoration of lost wages and benefits; and compels employers to prevent and correct future instances (Workplace Bullying Institute, n.d.).

The HWB provides a framework for an internal policy and process to promote a healthy academic work environment. For a detailed description of the HWB, see Massachusetts Senate Bill 1013 petitioning for "An Act addressing workplace bullying, mobbing, and harassment, without regard to protected class status" that may be modified and translated to our proposed policy (S.B. 1013, 190th Gen. Court, Reg. Sess. [Mass. 2017]). Although the HWB text does set forth the need for such a law or policy, provide helpful definitions to be utilized, and indicate when actors are liable, it does not address the mechanics such as the need for confidentiality or a reward system. However, some states (California and Utah) have mandated training in abusive conduct, and Utah has

implemented a complaint and investigative procedure that serves as a helpful example for policy development (Utah Admin. Code r. 477-16). A brief description of the state of Utah complaint procedure is outlined in the next section and provides a framework for the policy exemplar described later in this article.

Utah Complaint Procedure

Management shall permit employees who allege abusive conduct to file complaints and engage in a review process free from bias, collusion, intimidation, or retaliation.

(1) Employees who feel they are being subjected to abusive conduct should do the following:

(a) document the occurrence;

(b) continue to report to work; and

(c) identify a witness(es), if applicable.

(2) An employee shall file a written complaint of abusive conduct with their immediate supervisor, any other supervisor in their direct chain of command, or the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM), including the agency human resource field office.

(a) Complaints may be submitted by any employee, witness, volunteer or other individual.

(b) Any supervisor who has knowledge of abusive conduct shall take immediate, appropriate action in consultation with DHRM and document the action.

Investigative Procedure

(1) When warranted, investigations shall be conducted based on DHRM standards and business practices.

(2) Results of investigation

(a) If an investigation finds the allegations of abusive conduct to be sustained, agency management shall take appropriate administrative action.

(b) If an investigation reveals evidence of criminal conduct in abusive conduct allegations, the agency head or Executive Director, DHRM, may refer the matter to the appropriate law enforcement agency.

(c) At the conclusion of the investigation, the appropriate parties shall be notified.

(3) Participants in any abusive conduct investigation shall treat all information pertaining to the case as confidential.

Exemplar

Based on current research and the clear need to develop and implement a healthy workplace policy and procedure, an exemplar is offered by the authors.

Exemplar Policy Purpose. To (1) provide a formal process for fostering a civil, productive work environment, (2) outline a fair, consistent, confidential procedure for defining and addressing workplace incivility, including behaviors that pose a threat to the safety and/or well-being of self, others, or the academic environment, (3) provide a mechanism for reporting and subsequent investigation of uncivil acts if indicated), and (4) reward civility and respectful workplace behavior. This exemplar policy establishes the academic institution's commitment to the sustainment of a civil workplace and applies to all members of the campus community.

Exemplar Policy Statement. This academic institution is committed to fostering and sustaining a civil, respectful work environment free from uncivil, harmful, abusive, or threatening behaviors. The institution strives to provide an atmosphere of collegiality, transparency, collaboration, and safety—a campus community whereby all members are treated with dignity and respect. Consequently, all reports of uncivil, harmful, and/or abusive behaviors occurring in the workplace will be addressed, investigated, and followed through to resolution. Anyone filing legitimate complaints will not be reprimanded or admonished for reporting uncivil, harmful, and/or intimidating behaviors.

Commitment to Civility and a Healthy Work Environment. The academic institution is dedicated to creating and maintaining a civil, healthy work environment that supports respectful behavior and interactions, openness to opposing points of view, and an unequivocal commitment to inclusion and diversity. As a member of the campus community, each individual pledges to abide by the institutional vision, mission, shared values, and corresponding norms of desired behavior. Members further vow to communicate and interact with civility, professionalism, and respect. When disagreement occurs, differences will be restricted to the issue itself while continuing to respect the individual with whom we disagree. Each member of the institution is responsible and accountable for conducting themselves in a professional manner and treating others with dignity, respect and fairness regardless of their position or span of authority. Any form of uncivil, harmful, and/or abusive behaviors is prohibited and will be fully and swiftly addressed according to the procedures outlined in the healthy work environment policy.

Statement of Shared Values. Shared values include the following:

- Professionalism and academic citizenship.
- Inclusion and respect for diversity.
- Integrity and accountability.
- Respect and civility.
- Social justice.
- Collegiality and collaboration.

Statement on Uncivil, Harmful, and Abusive Behaviors. Uncivil, harmful, and abusive behavior is described as a style of interaction with any individual that interferes with work performance; causes distress; affects morale; negatively impacts working relationships; undermines a safe and productive workplace; and/or creates a hostile work environment.

Examples of Uncivil, Harmful, and Abusive Behaviors. The following are considered by the authors to represent uncivil behaviors:

- Using profane, disrespectful, or threatening language or other forms of verbal abuse.
- Making demeaning or degrading remarks, such as name-calling, insults, abusive comments.
- Harshly criticizing others in the presence of others or making comments that negatively affect work performance.
- Engaging in intimidating behavior that suppresses input and diminishes psychological safety, such as withholding important information, refusing to answer questions, or failing to assist when needed.
- Making unreasonable or unfavorable work assignments on a routine basis.

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- Retaliating against an individual who has reported an instance of incivility or abusive behavior.
- Abusing position or authority (berating or talking down to others).
- Purposefully excluding individuals from work-related meetings when they ought to be invited.
- Excluding, marginalizing, using the silent treatment or shunning others.
- Making personal attacks or threatening comments (verbal, e-mail, telephone, online).
- Setting a coworker up to fail.
- Withholding important information to perform a work assignment.
- Making racial, ethnic, sexual, gender, or religious slurs.
- Circulating private e-mails, without knowledge or permission.
- Making rude nonverbal behaviors or gestures (eye-rolling, arm-crossing, finger-pointing).
- Taking credit for work or contributions of others.
- Gossiping or spreading rumors.

Examples of Desired Behaviors (Management Responsibility). Leaders and other key personnel have a unique responsibility to model and ensure a healthy work environment where appropriate behaviors are consistently exhibited by everyone and where reports of uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors are swiftly and fairly addressed. Leaders and managers are expected to:

- Model civility and respectful interactions with all members of the campus community.
- Provide ongoing, multifaceted civility training.
- Be accountable and take responsibility for actions.
- Practice prevention strategies to promote civility.
- Celebrate and reward civil encounters and initiatives.
- Implement policies for reporting and addressing incivility.
- Take reports of uncivil behavior seriously and implement policies.
- Be observant for signs of incivility and prevent low risk uncivil behaviors from worsening.
- Maintain confidentiality when seeking to resolve incivility reports.
- Develop and implement a performance improvement plan, if indicated.
- Provide resources and issue sanctions for the offender, if indicated.
- Ensure that an individual filing a report is not victimized or admonished for doing so.
- Monitor and follow up regarding the situation, and evaluate the effectiveness of the process.

Examples of Desired Behaviors (Employee Responsibility). Employees are expected to:

- Model civility and respectful interactions with all members of the campus community.
- Participate in and encourage ongoing, multifaceted civility training.
- Be accountable and take responsibility for actions.
- Practice prevention strategies to promote civility.
- Recognize and report acts of civility.
- Celebrate and reward civil encounters and initiatives.
- Address and/or report uncivil (and civil) behaviors using organizational policies and procedures.
- Participate in the reporting and follow-up process as indicated.

Exemplar Policy Procedure. Clearly written, comprehensive, easily accessible, and specific step-by-step procedures are needed to proactively promote a healthy work environment and to reinforce that uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors will not be tolerated by the institution. All individuals (regardless of position or authority) who have knowledge of uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors are encouraged to immediately report the behavior to a member of the management team or to a Human Resources representative.

Reporting. All members and visitors of the organization who witness uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors are encouraged to complete a report. The completed form is reviewed by a neutral third party and examined for validity and follow-up. The individual identified in the report will be given an opportunity to address and respond to the complaint. A SMART policy will be used as a framework to report and address incivility, to reward civility, and to evaluate progress (Clark, 2017):

- System for confidential reporting.
- Managing report information.
- Addressing incivility.
- Rewarding civility.
- Tracking and evaluating progress.

System for Confidential Reporting. All employees have an obligation to report any alleged uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors and should report these allegations to their immediate supervisor, another member of the management team, or a Human Resources representative. Reports are filed using a confidential, web-based reporting system by which members of the academic workplace can report incidents of incivility. This reporting system ensures confidentiality and may be accessed from anywhere, including home or a private network. The reporting form should include relative contact information for follow-up purposes only and should not be released to any parties. Specific fields include time, date, and location of occurrence; description of the incident; impact of the uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors; the reporter's perception of and response to the issues; and suggestions for follow-up. The storage and retrieval structures must also be secure and confidential. If the alleged behavior is particularly egregious or violent, it must be reported immediately to the security department, with a follow-up report to the immediate supervisor. In the event of immediate threat or danger, employees and others are instructed to call 911.

Managing Report Information. Issues and complaints concerning alleged uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors will be held in confidence and with as limited disclosure to the extent necessary to conduct a thorough investigation. If the alleged complaint involves an employee, the investigation will be conducted by the Human Resources department; if the alleged complaint is against a nonemployee, a member of the management team will evaluate the merit of the alleged complaint to determine the appropriate action. The individual named in the report will be notified in writing that an allegation has been made, assured of the presumption of innocence at this juncture, and

given an opportunity to meet with the individual filing the report and member(s) of the neutral party or parties to address and resolve the problem. The intent is to resolve the alleged problem at the local level if possible and to find an interest-based resolution, with clear expectations, and a mutual agreement on who is going to do what by when. The investigation process includes reviewing the incivility report, meeting with all involved parties—reporter and alleged offender—and seeking resolution in a fair and timely manner. If one or more of the parties decline to meet, the report will be forwarded to and investigated by a supervisor (or designee such as a Human Resources representative). If the report is found to be valid, a supervisor or Human Resources representative will continue the investigative process and impose necessary remedies or sanctions.

Addressing Incivility. The objective of the investigation is to determine the merits of the report by interviewing the individual identified in the report, the reporter, witnesses, and any other relevant parties. All interviews are documented in writing to maintain clarity throughout the investigation. The identity of the investigator and other relevant parties should remain confidential because the goal is to conduct a fair and impartial investigation. If the report is validated, the first violation of the Healthy Work Environment Policy will result in the employee receiving a verbal warning, with no written documentation placed in the employee file. If a subsequent infraction occurs, the Human Resources director will conduct another thorough, fair, and confidential investigation. If the report is substantiated, the Human Resources director or supervisor will initiate a performance improvement plan, which includes education regarding the financial, human, and organizational costs that result from incivility, specific behavioral requirements (e.g., conflict negotiation or stress management classes), and associated time frames for compliance. After the investigation process is completed, a full report (including recommendations) is submitted to the individual's supervisor, who will follow up and implement actions. A plan for a follow-up meeting to evaluate progress on efforts to resolve the issue will be established.

If the individual makes minimal or no improvement or repetitive incidents are reported against that individual, disciplinary actions such as suspension, temporary leave, or termination may be warranted. The individual named in the report will be given an opportunity to respond in writing and allowed to appeal the decision. Appeals should include a detailed written outline of the reason for the appeal and should be submitted to and heard by another party that did not participate in the initial report or investigation. If the report is upheld, the supervisor will follow through with appropriate actions.

Rewarding Civility. It is important to develop and implement a confidential reporting system similar to one that involves alleged acts of uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors to collect reports of civility and benevolence occurring in the academic workplace. Like the uncivil, harmful, or abusive behaviors report, the civility report can be accessible online from home or from a private network. Specific fields include time, date, description of the civil or benevolent act, the reporter's perception of and response to the behavior, and suggestions for follow-up. These data are valuable in determining the success of the Healthy Work Environment Policy and used to dispense a civility reward (selected from a wish list of rewards and incentives) that the individual desires and holds in high regard.

Tracking and Evaluating Progress. The Human Resources department (or designee) will institute a method to evaluate the SMART policy, monitor progress, and use evaluation data to modify or improve processes to reach the desired results. Thus, the department needs to keep a record of each action or strategy to evaluate processes and to generate a formal report (or reports) to communicate progress on the SMART policy. The reports will be disseminated in aggregate to key members throughout the institution.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Incivility in academic workplaces can have detrimental effects on individuals, teams, departments, and the campus community at large. On the other hand, healthy academic workplaces generate heightened levels of employee satisfaction, engagement, and morale. Therefore, implementing comprehensive, confidential, and legally defensible policies related to workplace civility is critical to fostering and sustaining healthy academic work environments. To be effective, policies must include specific step-by-step procedures, an incremental disciplinary approach when applicable, and a reward system for policy adherence.

To further accomplish this goal, the authors recommend the inclusion of civility and collegiality as essential domains within annual employee performance evaluations. This action may require changes at the institutional level to revise faculty evaluations to include interpersonal effectiveness criteria beyond the traditional triumvirate of teaching, scholarship, and service. A faculty member may be proficient or even excel in all three areas, yet fail to get along with colleagues and add value to the department and campus culture overall. Including civility criteria in faculty evaluations and expanding them to include a 360-degree process may be a sensitive matter, but it may also help to create a more functional campus community (Clark et al., 2013). Although the American Association of University Professors (2016) discouraged creating a separate category for collegiality, it does not deny that collegiality, collaboration, and constructive cooperation are important aspects of a faculty member's overall performance. They suggest that instead of isolating collegiality as a separate criterion for faculty evaluation, institutions of higher education should focus on developing clear definitions of teaching, scholarship, and service in which collegiality is reflected. In any case, collegiality and civility are closely related, and leaders are challenged to consider effective ways to evaluate both.

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this document are the opinions of the individual authors. The information contained in the policy exemplar that follows is not fully inclusive, exclusive, or exhaustive of all reasonable methods or approaches, nor does it address the unique circumstances of each situation.

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ORIGINAL PAPER

Workplace Mistreatment: A Systematic Review of Interventions and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract

Workplace mistreatment has garnered increasing attention from scholars and so has calls for research on interventions to prevent or reduce this phenomenon. However, there has been a lack of broad systematic approaches to studying interventions and existing reviews on workplace mistreatment interventions have predominantly focused on workplace bullying and incivility in the healthcare sector. To address these gaps and set an agenda for future interventions research, our review focuses on interventions for all forms of mistreatment and across industries and organizations. We reviewed 40 intervention studies from 38 articles finding a wide variety of interventions for specific forms of workplace mistreatment, including incivility (n = 10), bullying (n = 8), (lateral) violence (n = 6), discrimination (n = 3), sexual harassment (n = 3), harassment (n = 1), ostracism (n = 2), and mistreatment in general (n = 1). The interventions range from policy changes and interactive workshops to in-person training programs, mindfulness workshops, and cognitive rehearsal sessions, and vary in duration, with some taking less than an hour and others extending over multi-day programs phased out over six months. In the end, we discuss our findings based on four types of interventions for workplace mistreatment, propose six key considerations for implementing effective interventions, and discuss potentially fruitful opportunities for advancing workplace mistreatment interventions scholarship.

Keywords Workplace mistreatment · Interventions · Systematic review

Introduction

In recent decades, workplace mistreatment has garnered increasing attention from scholars, practitioners, and policymakers (Dhanani et al., 2021; Han et al., 2022). Workplace mistreatment comprises a spectrum of negative interpersonal behaviors directed toward individuals or groups within a work environment (Dhanani & LaPalme, 2019). Forms of mistreatment include, but are not limited to, workplace bullying (e.g., Einarsen et al., 2009), workplace aggression (e.g., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010), workplace incivility (e.g., Yao et al., 2022), abusive supervision (e.g., Tepper et al., 2017), sexual harassment (e.g., Cortina & Areguin, 2021), and discrimination (e.g., Dipboye & Halverson, 2004). Workplace mistreatment is alarmingly prevalent in organizations worldwide. Recent meta-analytic research suggests that nearly one-third of employees experience workplace mistreatment and approximately 40% report witnessing such behaviors at work (Dhanani et al., 2021).

The consequences of workplace mistreatment are profound, affecting both individuals and organizations. Targets of workplace mistreatment often suffer from poorer physical and psychological health and well-being (e.g., Hershcovis & Barling, 2010; Hodgins et al., 2020), develop more negative job attitudes (e.g., Hershcovis, 2011; Schilpzand et al., 2016), exhibit lower performance and productivity (e.g., Hassard et al., 2018; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), and engage in more counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). Not surprisingly, workplace mistreatment also impacts organizations by deteriorating organizational climate and reducing overall

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productivity and financial performance (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2021; Hassard et al., 2018; Paulin & Griffin, 2017).

Extensive research has explored various forms of workplace mistreatment, such as bullying (e.g., Farley et al., 2023; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2012), incivility (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Park & Martinez, 2022; Yao et al., 2022), harassment (Neall & Tuckey, 2014), abusive supervision (e.g., Mackey et al., 2017; Tepper et al., 2017), and aggression (e.g., Cao et al., 2023; Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). This research has been synthesized in qualitative (e.g., Boudrias et al., 2021; Farley et al., 2023; Schilpzand et al., 2016) and quantitative (e.g., Cao et al., 2023; Mackey et al., 2017; Park & Martinez, 2022) systematic reviews examining antecedents and consequences of workplace mistreatment. However, empirical studies on interventions to prevent or stop workplace mistreatment or to mitigate its detrimental effects remain limited (Abeyta & Welsh, 2022; Hodgins et al., 2014). This gap in the literature highlights the critical need for further research to identify, develop, and refine effective intervention strategies. Understanding which interventions are most effective across different forms of mistreatment and organizational contexts is essential for both scholars and practitioners aiming to create healthier, more supportive workplaces. To address this gap, we conduct a systematic review of the existing literature, synthesizing current knowledge on workplace mistreatment interventions. This review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of effective strategies, highlight areas requiring further investigation, and offer practical insights to guide the development and implementation of interventions across diverse organizational settings.

Our review is not the first to examine interventions for workplace mistreatment. However, existing reviews have predominantly focused on workplace bullying and incivility within the healthcare sector (Gillen et al., 2017; Jang et al., 2022; Quinlan et al., 2014; Stagg & Sheridan, 2010)[1]. While these studies have provided valuable insights into interventions specifically addressing bullying and incivility, they tend to overlook other forms of mistreatment—such as sexual harassment, abusive supervision, and aggression—that are prevalent not only within healthcare but also across a wide range of other industries. These forms of mistreatment share common outcomes, including negative job attitudes, reduced well-being, and decreased productivity (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Hershcovis, 2011), and they frequently co-occur (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Walsh & Magley, 2014), compounding their detrimental effects on both individuals and organizations. Furthermore, these behaviors are not only harmful but may also serve as precursors to more severe mistreatment such as bullying and violence (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; De Pater & Toh, 2024; Zapf & Vartia, 2020). Hence, there is a clear need for more inclusive research on interventions that address a broader spectrum of workplace mistreatment beyond workplace incivility and bullying in the healthcare sector (Caponecchia et al., 2020; Han et al., 2022; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018).

Our review makes significant contributions to the workplace mistreatment literature. First, it examines interventions targeting a wide range of mistreatment types—such as harassment, ostracism, and abusive supervision—across diverse organizational contexts, moving beyond the traditional focus on bullying and incivility within the healthcare sector (e.g., Gillen et al., 2017; Jang et al., 2022; Quinlan et al., 2014; Stagg & Sheridan, 2010). While studies from the healthcare sector are included, our review intentionally incorporates research from multiple sectors to offer a more comprehensive understanding of how interventions function across contexts. This inclusive approach also reflects the documented co-occurrence of various forms of mistreatment (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Walsh & Magley, 2014) and yields novel insights into both overlapping and distinct features of interventions aimed at addressing them.

Second, this review responds directly to calls for more comprehensive intervention research (Caponecchia et al., 2020; Han et al., 2022; Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018) by synthesizing current evidence on intervention strategies. In doing so, we expand the theoretical understanding of effective strategies for mitigating diverse forms of workplace mistreatment, addressing both their distinct and shared features. Third, our review provides practical guidance for the design and implementation of workplace interventions. The findings facilitate evidence-based decision-making and support the development of targeted interventions that promote respectful, inclusive, and healthier workplaces while reducing the prevalence and impact of mistreatment (Hodgins et al., 2014).

In sum, a systematic review that addresses diverse forms of mistreatment across different organizational contexts will facilitate the identification of effective strategies, support efforts to reduce workplace mistreatment globally and across industries and generate novel theoretical insights into mitigating its harmful consequences.

Forms of Workplace Mistreatment

In this section, we discuss the various forms of mistreatment included in our review: workplace bullying, workplace incivility, interpersonal conflict, workplace aggression, workplace violence, lateral violence, social undermining,

[1] For exemptions, see, for instance, Escartín (2016), who reviewed selected workplace bullying intervention studies conducted in Australia, Europe, and the United States in various economic sectors and Hodgins et al. (2014), whose review also included other forms of workplace mistreatment.

ostracism, abusive supervision, sexual harassment, and discrimination. While these forms of workplace mistreatment are interrelated, they are generally considered to be distinct constructs. Specifically, all forms of workplace mistreatment are antisocial—meaning they harm the organization and/or its members) —and deviant, as they violate social norms. However, they differ in key dimensions, including intensity, intent to harm, target specificity, and frequency of occurrence (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Yao et al., 2022).

Workplace Bullying

Workplace bullying[2] refers to repeated and persistent aggressive and hostile behavior toward another person in the work environment over an extended period (Caponecchia et al., 2020; Einarsen et al., 2009). Definitions of bullying often refer to a power imbalance between the perpetrator and the target (Hodgins et al., 2020). However, this power imbalance is not necessarily related to formal positions within the organization; it may also relate to social or informal positions based on factors such as job tenure, age, or gender (Hershcovis, 2011). Accordingly, bullying describes "all situations where a worker, supervisor, or manager is systematically and repeatedly mistreated and victimized by fellow workers, subordinates, or superiors" (Einarsen, 2000, p. 380). Regardless of the relationship between the target and the perpetrator, targets of workplace bullying often feel trapped within the bullying process. This sense of entrapment is perpetuated by their perceived lower position of power, which limits their ability to prevent the bullying or defend themselves against the perpetrator's influence (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018).

Workplace Incivility

Workplace incivility refers to "low-intensity deviant behavior with ambiguous intent to harm the target, in violation of workplace norms for mutual respect" (Andersson & Pearson, 1999, p. 457). It typically manifests through subtle and less severe behaviors compared to workplace bullying and aggression. Nevertheless, workplace incivility can have detrimental consequences for both those who experience or witness it (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Schilpzand et al., 2016). It can also spread through an organization (Park & Martinez, 2022; Paulin & Griffin, 2017) and may escalate into more severe forms of interpersonal mistreatment if left unaddressed (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). Given its potential to escalate and permeate organizational culture, it is crucial to develop, assess, and implement interventions that minimize workplace incivility and prevent its spread and escalation within organizations (De Pater & Toh, 2024).

Interpersonal Conflict

Interpersonal conflict refers to a disagreement or perceived negative interaction between parties (Hershcovis, 2011). While it is often considered a component of broader mistreatment constructs such as workplace bullying, it also stands as a distinct form of mistreatment. Not all interpersonal conflict arises from bullying behaviors; however, individuals targeted by bullying frequently experience some level of conflict (Notelaers et al., 2018). Unlike other forms of mistreatment, which tend to yield predominantly negative outcomes, interpersonal conflict can lead to both positive and negative effects, depending on the context (Notelaers et al., 2018). The intensity of conflict can vary widely—from minor disagreements to more serious disputes (Hershcovis, 2011; Bowling & Beehr, 2006)—and is generally characterized by non-physical behaviors (Notelaers et al., 2018).

Social Undermining

Social undermining is defined as behavior that impedes a target's work-related success and reputation over time by hindering their capacity to build and sustain successful professional relationships (Duffy et al., 2006). Examples of undermining in the work context are withholding important information, inducing feelings of incompetence, and engaging in gossip. While social undermining may occur intentionally in the context of workplace bullying, it can also manifest unintentionally as a form of workplace incivility (e.g., Andersson & Pearson, 1999; Schilpzand et al., 2016). It may thus occur repeatedly over time or as a single, isolated incident. However, due to the specific nature of the harm it causes—particularly its focus on damaging one's reputation and professional relationships—some researchers consider social undermining a distinct form of workplace mistreatment (e.g., Duffy et al., 2002; Hershcovis, 2011).

Ostracism

Ostracism refers to one's perception of being ignored or excluded (Ferris et al., 2008). Similar to social undermining and interpersonal conflict, ostracism has been examined both as a distinct form of workplace mistreatment and as a component of other forms of workplace mistreatment, such as bullying (Einarsen et al., 2009), incivility, social undermining (Duffy et al., 2002), and aggression (Neuman & Baron, 1998). Both targets and perpetrators of ostracism may be individuals or groups of workers (Ramsey & Jones,

[2] While different researchers use different terminology, workplace bullying, (general) harassment, and mobbing can be used interchangeably (Einarsen et al., 2011). We use the term workplace bullying throughout this paper, as this term has been used most consistently (Branch et al., 2013).

2015). Similar to incivility, ostracism is often characterized by ambiguous intent, making it difficult to discern whether harm was deliberate. Although ostracism may co-occur with other forms of mistreatment, it is considered a unique construct due to the defining absence of interaction between the target and the perpetrator. This lack of direct engagement differentiates ostracism from more overt, interactive negative behaviors and highlights the importance of examining it as a separate concept within the broader mistreatment literature (Ferris et al., 2017).

Violence, Lateral Violence, and Aggression

Workplace violence encompasses a range of harmful behaviors—both overt and covert—such as physical aggression, verbal abuse, and intimidation, all of which contribute to a hostile or unsafe work environment (Ceravolo et al., 2012). Lateral violence, a specific form of workplace violence, occurs between colleagues of similar status and is particularly prevalent in hierarchical and high-stress work environments, where unresolved power dynamics and systemic issues foster peer-to-peer aggression (Griffin, 2004). A related but distinct concept is occupational violence, which refers to harm stemming from the nature or location of work, such as violence directed at healthcare professionals by patients or outside parties. This form of violence is unrelated to an organization's policies or interpersonal dynamics.

Workplace aggression, more broadly, refers to interpersonal behaviors that violate norms of mutual respect and are intended to harm the target, either physically or psychologically (Barling et al., 2009). A key distinction across these forms of mistreatment involves the source of the behavior. For example, coworker-initiated aggression tends to have more damaging effects on employee outcomes than aggression from external sources. LeBlanc and Kelloway (2002) found that internal aggression negatively affects employees' affective commitment to the organization, whereas occupational violence does not. This discrepancy may stem from employees' expectations that their organization will prevent internally driven harm through appropriate hiring practices, zero-tolerance policies, and cultural norms. Furthermore, Neuman and Baron (1998) suggested that organization-motivated aggression—where the perpetrator is an organizational insider—the motivation, rather than location, defines the aggressive act.

Unlike targeted forms of mistreatment such as abusive supervision, sexual harassment, and discrimination—which are typically directed at specific individuals or identity groups—workplace aggression and violence are more generalized and not necessarily directed at particular targets. However, like workplace bullying and incivility, these behaviors violate workplace norms and can create a toxic organizational climate.

Abusive Supervision

Abusive supervision, also referred to as supervisor undermining, supervisor aggression, or petty tyranny (Tepper et al., 2017), is defined as the consistent display of antagonistic verbal and nonverbal behaviors by a supervisor toward subordinates (Tepper, 2000). This definition specifically excludes physical acts, allowing for reasonable comparison to workplace bullying and aggression. However, unlike these broader forms of mistreatment, abusive supervision is uniquely characterized by the exclusive role of the supervisor as the perpetrator. As Hershcovis (2011) observes, abusive supervision represents a distinct form of workplace mistreatment because the supervisor's position of authority may influence both the nature and outcomes of the mistreatment. The inherent power imbalance in supervisor-subordinate relationships can exacerbate the negative effects of such behaviors, making them particularly harmful.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment is defined as "behavior that derogates, demeans, or humiliates an individual based on that individual's sex" (Berdahl, 2007, p. 644). It is thought of as "an expression of power and dominance" (Cortina & Areguin, 2021, p. 287) aimed at protecting or reinforcing existing gender hierarchies. The widely accepted Tripartite Model of Sexual Harassment (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Gelfand et al., 1995) distinguishes three forms of sexual harassment. The first and least common form is sexual coercion, which involves explicit or implicit attempts to tie employment conditions to sexual cooperation. The second form is unwanted sexual attention, which refers to unwelcome, unreciprocated, and offensive verbal and non-verbal expressions of sexual interest. In contrast to these, the third and most prevalent form, gender harassment, is not aimed at obtaining sexual cooperation. Instead, it involves the communication of denigrating and hostile attitudes based on someone's sex or gender (Fitzgerald et al., 1995; Gelfand et al., 1995). Similar to workplace bullying, sexual harassment can occur repeatedly over time or as a single, isolated incident. However, unlike other forms of workplace mistreatment, sexual harassment specifically targets individuals based on their sex and is often directed at women, reinforcing gender-based power imbalances in the workplace.

Discrimination

While sexual harassment refers to the mistreatment of workers based on their gender or sex (Cortina & Areguin, 2021), discrimination encompasses disadvantageous treatment based on a broader range of demographic or social characteristics. This often occurs in comparison to other workers or groups

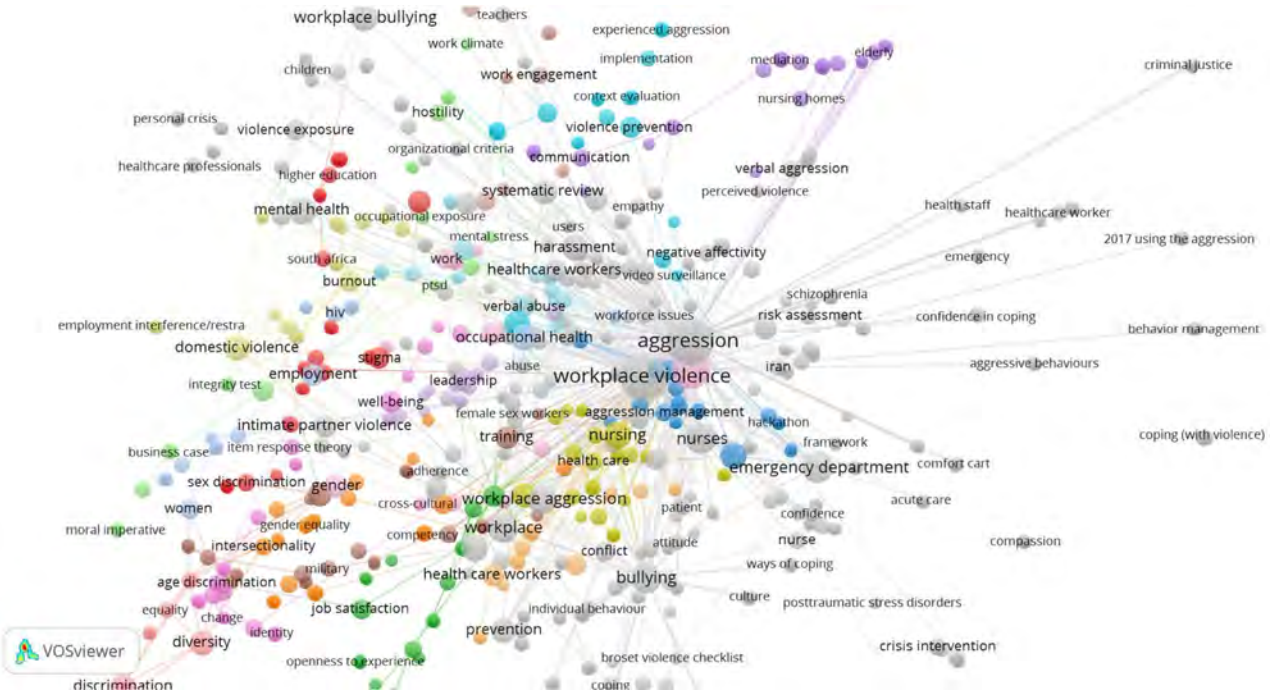

Fig. 1 A bibliometric map of workplace mistreatment research

with similar capabilities or potential (Dipboye & Halverson, 2004). Some scholars argue that sexual harassment and discrimination should be studied separately from other forms of mistreatment in the workplace, given the influence of targeted government policies and legal protections in many countries (Neall & Tuckey, 2014; Yang et al., 2014). Others, however, contend that sexual harassment and discrimination share common antecedents and outcomes and should therefore be included in broader studies of workplace mistreatment (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2021; Hodgins et al., 2014).

For several reasons, we concur with the latter and include interventions for sexual harassment and discrimination in our review. First, the organizational environment not only facilitates or limits the occurrence of more generic forms of workplace mistreatment (Farley et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2022) but also has a significant impact on the prevalence of sexual harassment and discrimination (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2018; Fitzgerald et al., 1995). Second, many countries have enacted legislation addressing not only sexual harassment and discrimination but also other forms of workplace mistreatment, such as aggression, bullying, and harassment (e.g., Cobb, 2017; Yamada, 2020). Third, most organizational codes of conduct explicitly prohibit workplace discrimination, sexual harassment, and other behaviors that violate norms of mutual respect (e.g., Schilpzand et al., 2016; Somers, 2001). Finally, despite growing attention from scholars, practitioners, and policymakers, various forms of workplace mistreatment—including discrimination and sexual harassment—persist and remain challenging to eradicate (Dhanani et al., 2021; Hershcovis et al., 2021).

Interventions for Workplace Mistreatment

The term *intervention* refers to "an action or actions which aim to maintain, change and/or transform conditions" (Caponecchia et al., 2020, p. 112). Compared to the extensive research on the causes and consequences of workplace mistreatment, empirical research on effective interventions is still in its infancy (Abeyta & Welsh, 2022; Jang et al., 2022; Schilpzand et al., 2016). As Fig. 1[3] shows, this research has focused on various forms of mistreatment.

Interventions to address workplace mistreatment vary widely in their aims, approaches, and levels of implementation. They can be implemented at the societal, organizational, team, or individual level, each targeting different drivers and manifestations of mistreatment (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2021; Zapf & Vartia, 2020). At the *societal level*, governments can develop and enforce national policies and legislation that mandate organizations to provide psychologically safe workplaces, thereby preventing or reducing workplace mistreatment. Interventions at the *organizational level* may include

[3] Figure 1 was generated with VOSviewer using bibliographic keyword co-occurrence from database search conducted on 20.th December 2023 in Scopus, PsycINFO, EBSCO Business Source Ultimate, and Web of Science (n = 1286).

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efforts to reshape the organizational culture, the introduction of policies promoting workplace respect and psychological safety, and leadership training and development. *Team level* interventions often focus on improving team dynamics through team building activities and conflict management styles. At the *individual level,* interventions might include communication skills training, counseling, or coaching. This review focuses on interventions at the organizational, team, and individual levels. Notably, many interventions target multiple levels, as they tend to be more effective than those designed to address a single level (Gillen et al., 2017; Hodgins et al., 2014).

To structure our review, we adapt Caponecchia et al.'s (2020) taxonomy of workplace bullying interventions, which classifies interventions according to five elements. The first element, *specificity*, refers to whether an intervention targets a specific form of workplace mistreatment or addresses multiple forms simultaneously. While many interventions are designed to address a specific form of workplace mistreatment, the frequent co-occurrence of different forms of mistreatment suggests that interventions targeting one form may address multiple forms (Han et al., 2022). The second element, *mode*, distinguishes between formal (e.g., HR complaints process) and informal (e.g., leadership behavior modeling) interventions. The third element, *agent*, describes who implements the intervention—management, an internal individual, or an external body. The fourth element, *focus*, identifies the target of the intervention, whether it is the victim, the perpetrator, bystanders, or the organization as a whole. Finally, *timecourse* refers to the timing and purpose of the intervention—primary (preventing mistreatment), secondary (addressing ongoing mistreatment to mitigate harm), tertiary (sustaining recovery and preventing recurrence), or multi-timecourse (combining both primary and secondary or secondary and tertiary).

Methods

We used a systematic qualitative approach to explore and evaluate existing empirical research on workplace mistreatment interventions. Our review followed the PRISMA protocol, a set of tools designed to improve the quality of systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Snyder, 2019). A key strength of this approach is the transparency and reproducibility of our methods, which helps generate evidence and make inferences (Kraus et al., 2020).

Literature Search

In the first step of the literature search process, we identified the search terms and established broad inclusion and exclusion criteria for the initial database search. We used a range of common terms and concepts related to workplace mistreatment as keywords, including mistreatment, misbehavior, bullying, harassment, incivility, aggression, mobbing, victimization, abusive supervision, discrimination, exclusion, ostracism, interpersonal conflict, undermining, violence, and ill treatment. We added the keywords workplace, interven*, treatment, and prevention, to limit the results to studies that focused specifically on interventions for workplace mistreatment. An example query for a search in Title and Abstract is *(interven* or treatment or prevention) and workplace and ("mistreatment" or "misbehavior" or "bullying" or "harassment" or "incivility" or "aggression" or "mobbing" or "victimization" or "abusive supervision" or "ill treatment" or "discrimination" or "exclusion" or "ostracism" or "interpersonal conflict" or "undermining" or "violence")*.

We conducted searches in four electronic databases: Scopus, PsycINFO, EBSCO Business Source Ultimate, and Web of Science. We limited the initial search results to peer-reviewed journal articles in English, following widely accepted standards of academic rigor within business and management research (Abeyta & Welsh, 2022). Due to the high number of irrelevant results from Scopus and Web of Science, we restricted searches in these databases to the subject areas of business and psychology, excluding results related to topics such as parenting and intimate partner violence, as this review focuses specifically on mistreatment in the workplace. Search results in the two other databases, PsycINFO or EBSCO Business Source Ultimate, were not restricted by subject area. To ensure a comprehensive collection of existing literature, we did not limit searches by publication year or research design in any of the databases.

Screening for Relevance

We exported the articles collected from the database search (n = 2,609) to Covidence, an online-based systematic review platform. We also conducted a manual citation search of five existing reviews and meta-analyses on different forms of workplace mistreatment, resulting in additional articles (n = 29). Altogether, we proceeded with 2,638 articles through the first round of screening in Covidence, which automatically excluded duplicates (n = 282).

Two members of the research team independently and anonymously screened the titles and abstracts of the remaining articles (n = 2,356) for relevance in Covidence, based on three criteria. The title or abstract of the article must indicate that it focuses on (1) any form of mistreatment, AND (2) workplace or workplaces, AND (3) an intervention (whether primary, secondary, tertiary, or multiple) at any level (e.g., individual or organizational). We excluded articles that did not meet these criteria. For example, research on interpersonal mistreatment outside of the workplace (e.g., intimate partner violence, bullying at school) was excluded. We

also excluded research that referenced a form of workplace mistreatment (e.g., bullying, incivility) but focused on its occurrence, antecedents, or consequences without studying an intervention of any kind. Cases where the researchers disagreed about the inclusion or exclusion were recorded as a "conflict" in Covidence. There was fair inter-rater reliability between the researchers [Cohen's Kappa (k) = 0.268; proportionate agreement = 0.821; random agreement probability = 0.755]. At the end of this phase of the screening process, the researchers met to discuss the "conflicts" and decided whether the article should proceed to the next stage. This method safeguards against bias in the inclusion/exclusion decision-making process (Nielsen et al., 2018). A total of 121 articles proceeded to the next stage of the screening process for full-text review.

During the full-text review, we excluded 83 articles for the following reasons: (a) the intervention involved not only workers but also people external to the organization (e.g., patients, customers) (n = 17); (b) the study did not test a specific intervention (i.e., the paper described an intervention process or reported results from circumstantial changes within an organization) (n = 25); (c) the article did not report the outcomes of the intervention (n = 3); (d) the intervention was not designed to address workplace mistreatment (n = 6); and (e) the article was not relevant (e.g., did not report primary data, theoretical paper, review article) (n = 32). The two researchers involved in the screening process discussed any "conflicts" regarding inclusion or exclusion of a paper until consensus was reached. In the end, 38 articles (resulting in total 40 studies) met the inclusion criteria for comprehensive analytical review. The screening process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram (see Fig. 2).

Data Extraction and Analysis

We adapted Caponecchia et al.'s (2020) taxonomy of workplace bullying intervention types to create a data extraction sheet. We categorized interventions for assessment in terms of the mode (i.e., formal or informal), agent (i.e., the person(s) who implemented the intervention), focus (i.e., the target(s) of the intervention), and timecourse (i.e., primary, secondary, or tertiary intervention). The data extraction sheet also included: (a) identifying details about the articles (e.g., authors, publication, date, etc.), (b) the form of workplace mistreatment and how it was defined, (c) the country where the intervention was conducted, (d) the industry, (e) the sample size, (f) the sample type, (g) the study design, (h) the method of data collection, (i) the time between the intervention and measuring the outcome variables, (j) dependent variables and measures used to assess these variables, (k) the theoretical framework, and (l) a brief description of the intervention program and a summary of the study results.

Results

Descriptive Details of the Intervention Studies Included in the Review

Table 1 provides the descriptive details of the 40 studies included in this review. Two of the articles reported the results of two intervention studies (Döbrich et al., 2014; Locklear et al., 2021). The reviewed studies have been published in 33 different journals. Most intervention studies (25) were conducted in the healthcare industry (two of these studies also included research participants from other industries). Other intervention studies were conducted in the education sector (3), human resources (2), governmental organizations (1), the public sector (2), and the logistics sector (1). The remaining studies either described the research participants as coming from a variety of organizations and industries (3) or did not disclose the industry (3). The intervention studies took place in the United States (17), Canada (6), Australia (3), United Kingdom (3), Germany (2), Spain (1), Denmark (1), Finland (1), Japan (1), New Zealand (1), South Korea (1), and Sweden (1). One article did not mention the country where the intervention took place.

Most studies focused on interventions for a specific form of workplace mistreatment: workplace incivility (10), workplace bullying (8), (lateral) violence (6), discrimination (3), sexual harassment (3), harassment (1), and ostracism (2). Some intervention studies (9) focused on multiple forms of workplace mistreatment, all of which included workplace bullying or incivility. The remaining study focused on workplace mistreatment in general. We discuss the interventions in more detail below.

Interventions for Workplace Mistreatment

As shown in Table 1, a wide variety of interventions have been used to address workplace mistreatment. These interventions include policy changes, interactive workshops, in-person training programs, mindfulness sessions, and cognitive rehearsal exercises. The duration varied significantly, ranging from brief sessions lasting less than an hour to multi-day programs delivered over a six-month period. Below, we discuss these interventions in more detail, organizing our discussion based on intervention type: educational (26), experiential (7), integrative (5), and informational (2). For each intervention type, we discuss findings for primary interventions (those focusing on the prevention of workplace mistreatment), secondary interventions (those focusing on the treatment of workplace mistreatment), tertiary interventions (those focusing on sustaining treatment and facilitating recovery from workplace mistreatment), and

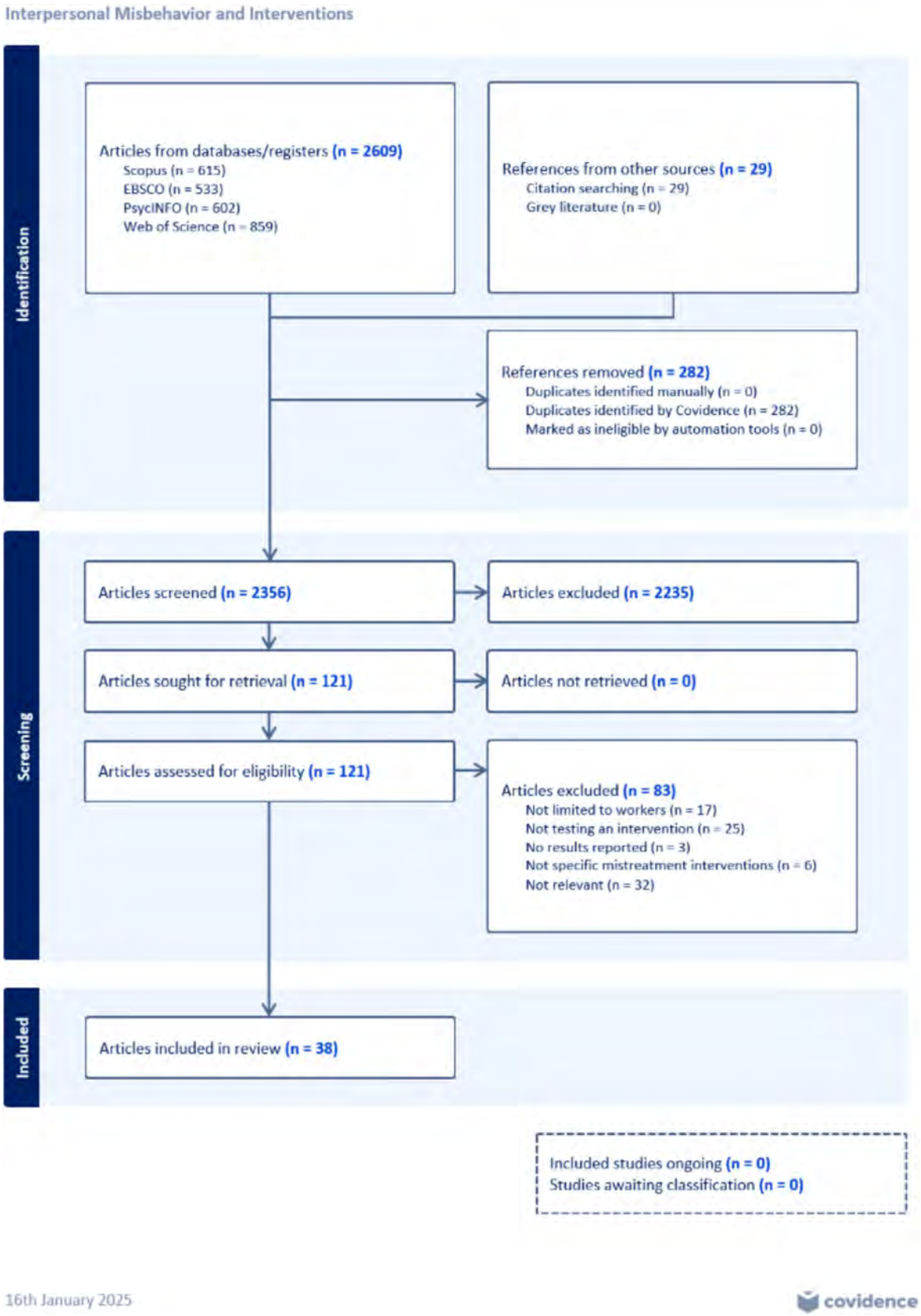

Fig. 2 PRISMA statement

Table 1 Descriptive details of studies included in the review

Authors	Journal	SJR	Mistreatment form	Intervention type	Intervention duration	Industry	Country
Baixauli et al. (2020)	International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health	Q2	Bullying	Educational	10 times 1-h sessions over 2 days	Varied	Spain
Barak (1994)	Journal of Counseling & Development	Q2	Sexual harassment	Educational	1 day	Government	–
Barrett et al. (2009)	Nursing Administration Quarterly	Q2	Lateral violence	Educational	2 times 2-h session	Healthcare	USA
Benmore et al. (2018)	Journal of Health Organization and Management	Q2	Bullying, undermining, and harassment	Educational	half day	Healthcare	UK
Bingham and Scherer (2001)	The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	Q1	Sexual harassment	Educational	30 min	Education	USA
Ceravolo et al. (2012)	Journal of Nursing Management	Q1	Violence	Educational	60–90 min	Healthcare	USA
Chipps and McRury (2012)	Journal for Nurses in Staff Development	NA	Bullying and negative acts	Educational	3 months	Healthcare	USA
Dahlby and Herrick (2014)	The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Q2	Lateral violence	Educational	90 min	Healthcare	USA
Döbrich et al. (2014) (Study 1)	International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management	Q4	Discrimination (age-based)	Experiment	Duration of the experiment	Human Resources	Germany
Döbrich et al. (2014) (Study 2)	International Journal of Human Resources Development and Management	Q4	Discrimination (age-based)	Experiment	Duration of experiment	Human Resources	Germany
Embree et al. (2013)	Nursing Research and Practice	Q2	Violence	Educational	–	Healthcare	USA
Gedro and Wang (2013)	Advances in Developing Human Resources	Q2	Incivility	Educational	90–180 min	Education	USA
Goldberg (2007)	Psychology of Women Quarterly	Q1	Sexual harassment	Educational	2 h	Varied	USA
Griffin (2004)	The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Q2	Lateral violence	Educational	2 h	Healthcare	USA
Holme (2006)	Industrial and Commercial Training	Q2	Bullying and harassment	Educational	–	Logistics	UK
Kang and Jeong (2019)	International Journal of Nursing Practice	Q1	Bullying	Educational	–	Healthcare	South Korea
Kirk et al. (2011)	Journal of Applied Social Psychology	Q2	Incivility	Experiential	3 times 20 min	Varied	Australia
Kuntz and Searle (2023)	Journal of Interpersonal Violence	Q1	Incivility and bullying	Educational	1 day	Healthcare	New Zealand
Lasater et al. (2015)	The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Q2	Incivility	Educational	6 months	Healthcare	USA

Table 1 (continued)

Authors	Journal	SJR	Mistreatment form	Intervention type	Intervention duration	Industry	Country
Lee Smith and Kelloway (2016)	Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance	Q2	Mistreatment	Educational	90 min	Healthcare	Canada
Leiter et al. (2012)	Journal of Occupational Health Psychology	Q1	Incivility	Educational	6 months	Healthcare	Canada
Locklear et al. (2021) (Study 1)	Journal of Applied Psychology	Q1	Incivility	Experiential	10 days	–	USA
Locklear et al. (2021) (Study 2)	Journal of Applied Psychology	Q1	Incivility, gossip, and ostracism	Experiential	10 days	–	USA
Mallette et al. (2011)	Nursing Leadership	Q2	Lateral violence	Educational	–	Healthcare	Canada
Matsutaka et al. (2022)	Psychology of Sexual Orientation and Gender Diversity	Q1	Discrimination (Homophobia and Transphobia)	Educational	4 times 2 to 3 h	Healthcare and Human Resources	Japan
McDermott et al. (2021)	The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Q2	Incivility	Educational	1 h	Healthcare	USA
Meloni and Austin (2011)	Australian Health Review	Q2	Bullying and harassment	Integrative	–	Healthcare	Australia
Mikkelsen et al. (2011)	International Journal of Workplace Health Management	Q2	Bullying and interpersonal conflict	Integrative	–	Healthcare and education	Denmark
Osatuke et al. (2009)	The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science	Q1	Incivility	Educational	6 months	Healthcare	USA
Pate and Beaumont (2010)	Employee Relations	Q1	Bullying and harassment	Integrative	–	Public sector	UK
Quinlan (2010)	Action Research	Q1	Bullying	Experiential	1 day	Healthcare	Canada
Quinlan et al. (2020)	Work, Employment and Society	Q1	Harassment	Experiential	2 days	Healthcare	Canada
Quiun and Herrero (2022)	The Coaching Psychologist	NA	Bullying	Experiential	–	–	Spain
Ramsey and Jones (2015) (Study 1)	Consciousness and Cognition	Q1	Ostracism	Experiential	–	Education	USA
Seppälä et al. (2023) (Study 1)	Social Science and Medicine	Q1	Bullying and violence	Educational	3 times 2 h	Public sector	Finland
Spence Laschinger et al. (2012)	Nursing Research	Q1	Incivility	Educational	6 months	Healthcare	Canada
Stagg et al. (2011)	The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing	Q2	Bullying	Educational	2 h	Healthcare	USA
Stevens (2002)	Health Affairs	Q1	Bullying	Integrative		Healthcare	Australia
Strandmark and Rahm (2014)	Scandinavian Journal of Public Health	Q1	Bullying	Integrative	–	Healthcare	Sweden
Warrner et al. (2016)	Nursing Management	Q2	Incivility	Educational	45 min	Healthcare	USA

Note. SJR, SCImago Journal ranking 2024

multi timecourse interventions (combining both primary and secondary or secondary and tertiary interventions).

Educational Interventions

Educational interventions are structured programs or activities designed to improve knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behaviors related to specific issues through instructional methods (Howard & Embree, 2020). Our review includes 26 educational interventions: 4 primary, 15 secondary, and 7 multi-timecourse interventions. A summary of the educational interventions is provided in Table 2.

Primary Educational Interventions

The most extensively studied educational intervention for workplace mistreatment is the Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) program. This six-month intervention is designed to reduce workplace incivility through weekly meetings led by trained organizational facilitators. The ultimate aim of the CREW program is to foster organization-level change by employing individual-level strategies to improve workplace relationships and establish respectful, civil social norms (Osatuke et al., 2009). This participant-centered and flexible program offers facilitators a toolkit of resources to tailor each weekly session to the unique culture and issues of specific workgroups. While the delivery and quality of the intervention remain consistent, the specific content may vary across groups and sessions throughout the six-month period (Spence Laschinger et al., 2012). Three large-scale studies evaluating the CREW program, utilizing control groups and pre- and post-test designs, showed an increase in workplace civility (Leiter et al., 2012; Osatuke et al., 2009) and a decrease in supervisor incivility (Leiter et al., 2012; Spence Laschinger et al., 2012) among participating workgroups. However, these studies found no significant change in co-worker incivility (Leiter et al., 2012; Spence Laschinger et al., 2012).

The only other primary educational intervention we identified was designed to prevent workplace bullying and violence through a series of three 2-h educational discussion workshops, supplemented by mentoring for supervisors (Seppälä et al., 2023)[4]. The workshops provided a definition of workplace bullying, reviewed appropriate and inappropriate behaviors, assessed work unit strengths and weaknesses, and guided participants in setting developmental goals. Despite the use of a large sample and the inclusion of a control group, pre- and post-test analyses showed no significant direct or indirect effects of the intervention on reducing workplace bullying. However, improvements in psychosocial factors were associated with reductions in workplace bullying in both the intervention and control groups (Seppälä et al., 2023).

Secondary Educational Interventions

The primary educational interventions described above focused on workers in general. Four of the 15 secondary educational interventions also focused on workers in general (Benmore et al., 2018; Dahlby & Herrick, 2014; Embree et al., 2013; Lee Smith & Kelloway, 2016). The others targeted specific groups: bystanders (3), targets (7), or both targets and bystanders (1).

General Secondary Educational Interventions

Benmore et al. (2018) evaluated the effectiveness of "Stopit!", a half-day intervention designed to address bullying, undermining, and harassment. The program incorporated behavioral analyses of video cases, role playing exercises, transactional analysis, educational games, and group discussions. Post-test results from 12 of the 36 participants indicated increased awareness of their own mistreatment behaviors, a greater likelihood of supporting targets, and an increased willingness to provide feedback and repair relationships. Acknowledging the success of the CREW intervention (Leiter et al., 2011; Osatuke et al., 2009; Spence Laschinger et al., 2012), Lee Smith and Kelloway (2016) recognized that the six-month time commitment required for CREW could be a barrier for some organizations. Therefore, they co-developed Respect in the Workplace, a 90-min interactive online training program covering topics such as discrimination, harassment, bullying, power dynamics, emotional regulation, and responding to mistreatment. This program allowed participants to complete the training in multiple sessions at their own pace, offering a more time- and cost-effective alternative to longer interventions. Analysis of pre- and post-intervention survey data from participants and a control group showed increased civility and self-efficacy, but no significant changes in workplace incivility, stress, or job satisfaction.

Two other general secondary educational interventions (Dahlby & Herrick, 2014; Embree et al., 2013) focused on addressing workplace incivility through cognitive rehearsal techniques. Dahlby and Herrick (2014) examined the effectiveness of a 90-min online intervention targeting lateral violence. Participants were educated about lateral violence and its consequences and engaged in cognitive rehearsal

[4] Seppälä et al. (2023) conducted two intervention studies. A first study focused on preventing workplace bullying, while a second addressed workplace violence, including violence perpetrated by external sources (e.g., patients). As this review focuses on internal workplace mistreatment, only the first study was included in our analysis.

Table 2 Educational interventions for workplace mistreatment

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Leiter et al. (2012)	Incivility	Educational	Training	6 months	Individual	General	262	Age: average 41.67 years Gender: 88.3% women	Primary	Increased civility ($\beta = 2.67^{*}$); decreased experienced supervisor incivility ($\beta = -2.65^{*}$), no change in co-worker incivility ($\beta = -1.21$), and instigated incivility ($\beta = 0.31$)	Partially effective	Control group; Pre & post test	643
Osatuke et al. (2009)	Incivility	Educational	Training	6 months	Individual	General	2194	–	Primary	Increased workplace civility	Effective	Control group; Pre & post test	> 4000
Spence Laschinger et al. (2012)	Incivility	Educational	Training	6 months	Individual	General	–	Gender: 93% women and 5.2% men; Education: 44.7% community college diploma, 42.1% bachelor's degree, 10.6%. Experience: mean 18.12 years; Job tenure: mean 13.94 years with organisation and 8.88 years with unit	Primary	Decreased experienced supervisor incivility ($\beta = -2.87^{*}$); no change in co-worker incivility ($\beta = -1.05$)	Partially effective	Control group; Pre & post test	573
Seppälä et al. (2023)	Bullying and violence at work	Educational	Workshop	3 times 2-h	Multilevel (team and individual)	General	315	Age: 9% < 30 years, 51% 30–50 years, 40% > 50 years; Gender: 66% women and 34% men	Primary	No change in workplace bullying ($\beta = -0.017$) and violence at work ($\beta = 0.029$)	Not effective	Control group; Pre & post test	2625

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Chipps and McRury (2012)	Bullying and negative acts	Educational	Behavioral	3 months	Individual	General	16	Gender: 94% women Race/ethnicity: 81% Caucasian; Experience: average 5.5 years	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Negative acts increased from < 1 to averagely 1.6 daily/weekly ($p = .13$); Bullying intensity increased from 7.6 to 8.3 daily/ weekly ($p = .66$); decreased bullying experienced among 37% to 6% of participants	Partially effective	No control group; Pre & post test	16
Baixauli et al. (2020)	Bullying	Educational	Training	2 days	Individual	General	91	Gender: 50.55% women and 49.45% men	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Reduced bullying strategies and role conflict in participants experiencing medium to high level bullying. No change in low level bullying	Partially effective	Randomized field experiment; Pre & post test	140
Barrett et al. (2009)	Lateral violence	Educational	Team building	2 times a 2-h session	Multilevel (team and individual)	General	–	Age: 25 to 60 years (mean 40.8); Experience: average 13.5 years; Job tenure: 0.3 to 35 years (mean 11)	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Improved group cohesion; improved group interaction; no change in how well workers worked together	Partially effective	No control group; Pre & post test	45

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Lasater et al. (2015)	Incivility	Educational	Training	6 months	Multi-level (team and individual)	General	94	Age: 16 to 70 years; Gender: majority women; Race/ethnicity: majority Causcasian Education: high school to master's degree Job tenure: < 1 to 13 + years	Multi-time-course: Primary, Secondary	Decreased total incivility (Unit A: $\beta = -0.12^{***}$, Unit B: $\beta = -0.19^{***}$); inappropriate jokes (A: $\beta = -0.14^{***}$), hostile/rude (B: $\beta = -0.21^{***}$), inconsiderate (A: $\beta = -0.12^{***}$ B: $\beta = -0.19^{***}$), gossip (A: $\beta = -0.27^{***}$, B: $\beta = -0.25^{**}$); free riding (A: $\beta = -0.10^{*}$), supervisor incivility (B: $\beta = -0.17^{*}$) and physician incivility (A: $\beta = -0.16^{***}$, B: $\beta = -0.26^{***}$). No significant decrease in inappropriate jokes for Unit B, hostile/ rude and supervisor incivility for Unit A, and free riding for Unit B ($\beta = -0.12$)	Partially effective	No control group; multiple post tests	94

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Bingham and Scherer (2001)	Sexual harassment	Educational	Training	30 min	Individual	General	197	Gender: 49.24% women and 50.76% men; Race/ethnicity: 89% Caucasian, 8% from other racial/ethnic groups, 3% did not specify	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Increased knowledge about sexual harassment; Participants did not differ from non-participants in perception of appropriateness of sexual harassment and the harm it causes; Male participants perceived lower occurrence of coercion, were more likely to blame the victim, and were less willing to report sexual harassment than non-participating men; Female participants did not differ from non-participating women in blame attributions and their willingness to report sexual harassment	Largely counter-productive	Control group; Post test only	516

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
McDermott et al. (2021)	Incivility	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	1 h	Individual	Bystander	155	Age: 20 to 60 years, 80% 20–30 years; Gender: 86.45% women and 13.55% men; Race/ethnicity: 51% Caucasian, 28% African American, 10% Asian, 4.5% Hispanic, 5.8% unknow; Education: 60.6% bachelor's degree, 27.1% accelerated bachelor's degree, 12.3% associate's or master's degree	Secondary	Most participants indicated increased ability to respond to witnessed workplace incivility	Unclear	No control group; Post test only	114

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Kuntz and Searle (2023)	Incivility and bullying	Educational	Training	1 day	Individual	Bystander	140	Age: 26 to 65 years (mean 37); Job tenure: < 1 to 37 years (average 5)	Secondary	Increased sense of psychological safety; Increased bystander efficacy; Increased utility of intervening; Increased perceived incivility norms in the organization; Increased intention to intervene supervisor to subordinate mistreatment; No change in perceived negative acts in the organization; No change in perceived cost of intervening. These changes were not sustained two months later	Effective in the short term; Ineffective in the long term	No control group; Pre and post test	26

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Matsutaka et al. (2022)	Discrimination (Homophobia & Transphobia)	Educational		4 times 2 to 3 h	Individual	Bystander	33	Age: mean 51.06 years Gender: 55.56% women and 44.44% men	Secondary	Increased knowledge and comprehension of LGBTQ + people; Increased self-efficacy for responding to and supporting LGBTQ + people; Decreased overt homophobia and transphobia; No change in implicit homophobia and transphobia	Largely effective	Randomized field experiment; Pre & post test	42
Benmore et al. (2018)	Bullying, undermining, and harassment	Educational	Behavioral	Half day	Individual	General	36	–	Secondary	Reduced acceptance of workplace mistreatment; Increased likelihood to support the target; Increased awareness of own workplace mistreatment behaviors, Increased likelihood to provide feedback and repair relationships	Partially effective	No control group; Post test only	12
Embree et al. (2013)	Violence	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	–	Individual	General	–	Age: 35 to 55 years Education: 15% nationally certified	Secondary	No significant change in internalized sexism, minimization of self, feelings of empowerment, and lateral violence	Not effective	No control group; Pre & post test	33

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Dahlby and Herrick (2014)	Lateral violence	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	90 min	Individual	General	46	Age: 19 to 59 years; Gender: majority women; Race/ethnicity: majority white; Experience: 2 to 15 years; Job tenure: majority 2 years	Secondary	Decreased seriousness of observed lateral violence; No significant change in the occurrence of workplace rudeness, experienced lateral violence, observed lateral violence, instigated lateral violence, personality clashes, power and control issues, job stress, misunderstandings related to gender, misunderstanding related to cultural differences, willingness to stand up to the perpetrator, supervisors and peers willing to intervene, and fear of retaliation	Largely ineffective	No control group; Pre and post test	25

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Lee Smith and Kelloway (2016)	Mistreatment	Educational		90 min	Individual	General	92	Age: 24% < 30 years, 16% 31–40 years, 27% 41–50 years, 26% 51–60 years, 5% 60 + years; Gender: 88% women and 12% men; Education: 83% at least some post-secondary	Secondary	Increased self-efficacy; Increased experienced civility; No change in workplace incivility, stress, job satisfaction, or recognition of workplace incivility	Partially effective	Control group; Pre & post test	102
Kang and Jeong (2019)	Bullying	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	–	Individual	Target	36	Age: mean 30.78 years Experience: 6 months or more	Secondary	Reduced experience of person- and work-related bullying; No change in experience of intimidation-related bullying	Partially effective	Control group; Pre & post test	72
Griffin (2004)	Lateral violence	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	2 h	Individual	Target	62	Gender: 92.31% women and 7.69% men; Job tenure: 6 to 12 months	Secondary	Knowledge of lateral violence appeared to allow newly licensed nurses to depersonalize it; the learned cognitive responses helped them confront the lateral violence offenders	Unclear	No control group; Post test only	26

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Goldberg (2007)	Sexual harassment	Educational	Lecture and discussion format	2 h	Individual	Target	–	Age: average 27 years Gender 55% men Education: bachelor's degree or higher; Experience: average 8 years total and 4.22 years career-related	Secondary	Reduced intention to confront their perpetrator; Reduced intention to report the perpetrator for those high in conflict avoidance	Largely counterproductive	Control group; Pre & post test	234
Warrner et al. (2016)	Incivility	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	45 min	Individual	Target	114	Gender: 80.5% women, 12.2% men, 7.3% undisclosed; Job tenure: 14.6% < 1 year, 51.2% 1–5 years, 22% 5–10 years, 4.9% 10 + years, 7.3% undisclosed	Secondary	No significant change in awareness of incivility; No significant change in the occurrence of nurse, supervisor, patient, and visitor incivility; Decreased general and physician incivility	Partially effective	No control group; Pre & post test	
Mallette et al. (2011)	Lateral violence	Educational	Self-directed	–	Individual	Target	–	Age: 18 to 63 + years Gender: 90.24% women and 9.76% men; Education: 59.1% baccalaureate nursing degree; Experience: majority 1 to 4 year; Job tenure: majority 1 to 4 years	Secondary	Increased knowledge of lateral violence; Increased confidence in responding to lateral violence	Effective	Randomized field experiment; Pre & post test	164
Gedro and Wang (2013)	Incivility	Educational	Workshop	90–180 min	Individual	Target	> 800	–	Secondary	–	Not evaluated	No control group; Post test only	–

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Ceravolo et al. (2012)	Violence	Educational	Workshop	60–90 min	Individual	Target	> 5100	–	Secondary	Reduced experience of verbal abuse; Increased perception of a respectful, supportive, and safe workplace culture; Increased determination to address workplace mistreatment; Decreased turnover and vacancy rates	Largely effective	No control group; Pre and post test	485
Stagg et al. (2011)	Bullying	Educational	Cognitive rehearsal	2 h	Individual	Target & bystander	62	Age: 40% 41 to 50 years Gender: 100% women Education: 45% bachelor's degree; Experience: 35% > 20 years; Job tenure: 40% 3 to 5 years	Secondary	Increased awareness of bullying behaviors; Increased knowledge of bullying management; Increased likelihood to report observed and perpetrated bullying; Increased sense of being able to manage bullying adequately; No change in perceived ability for defending themselves against a bully	Largely effective	No control group; Pre and post test	62

Table 2 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Time-course	Results / Effect sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Barak (1994)	Sexual harassment	Educational	Cognitive behavioral	1 day	Individual	Target	25	Age: 25 to 55 years; Gender: 100% women; Education: High school to advanced university degree	Multi-time-course: Secondary, tertiary	Increased confidence in coping with sexual harassment; Lower severity of experienced sexual harassment	Effective	No control group; Post test only	6
Holme (2006)	Bullying and harassment	Educational	Training & counselling	–	Organization	Bystander	22	–	Multi-time-course: Secondary, tertiary	Increased understanding of bullying and harassment	Partially effective	No control group; Post test only	–

exercises to practise appropriate responses. Pre- and post-test analyses from 25 participants showed that this intervention was largely ineffective. Although the seriousness of observed lateral violence decreased, there were no significant changes in workplace rudeness, experienced or observed lateral violence, instigated lateral violence, personality clashes, power dynamics, job stress, gender or cultural misunderstandings, willingness to stand up to perpetrators, supervisors' and peers' willingness to intervene, or fear of retaliation. Embree et al. (2013) also implemented a cognitive rehearsal-based intervention aimed at preventing and addressing workplace violence. Pre- and post-intervention data from 33 participants showed this intervention was also largely ineffective, with no significant changes in internalized sexism, self-minimization, feelings of empowerment, and lateral violence.

Bystander-Focused Secondary Educational Interventions

Bystander-focused secondary educational interventions have been evaluated for their effectiveness in addressing workplace incivility (McDermott et al., 2021), workplace incivility and bullying (Kuntz & Searle, 2023), and discrimination (Matsutaka et al., 2022). McDermott et al. (2021) evaluated a one-hour intervention that educated participants about workplace incivility and its consequences. This program included cognitive rehearsal exercises, allowing participants to practice appropriate responses to uncivil incidents. At the end of the session, participants were given cueing cards that described appropriate responses to common forms of workplace incivility. Post-test results from 114 participants indicated improved ability to respond to witnessed workplace incivility. Kuntz and Searle (2023) assessed the effectiveness of one-day educational intervention targeting workplace incivility and bullying. Participants were educated on identifying appropriate behaviors and social norms and were introduced to four approaches for bystander intervention. Analysis of pre- and post-test data conducted two weeks after the intervention (N = 26) showed promising results: participants reported increased psychological safety, stronger incivility norms within the organization, greater bystander efficacy, a higher utility of intervening, and a stronger intention to intervene in supervisor-to-subordinate mistreatment. However, a follow-up post-test conducted two months after the intervention showed that these improvements were not sustained.

Matsutaka et al. (2022) examined the effectiveness of the Program for Respect, Inclusion, and Diversity of LGBTQ + Employees (PRIDE). This intervention consisted of four sessions, each lasting two to three hours, delivered one to two weeks apart. The program was designed to equip bystanders with strategies for responding to the stress and harassment experienced by LGBTQ + employees.

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Participants (N = 33) randomly assigned to the intervention engaged in lecture-style presentations, group discussions, and interactive activities, while another 33 participants formed a control group on a waiting list for future participation. Pre- and post-test analyses (N = 42) showed that participants demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding of LGBTQ + issues, greater self-efficacy in responding to and supporting LGBTQ + colleagues, and reduced overt homophobia and transphobia. However, there were no significant changes in implicit homophobia and transphobia.

Target-Focused Secondary Educational Interventions

We identified seven target-focused secondary educational interventions, including three workshop-based programs (Ceravolo et al., 2012; Gedro & Wang, 2013; Goldberg, 2007), one self-paced virtual role-play program (Mallette et al., 2011), and three cognitive rehearsal interventions (Griffin, 2004; Kang & Jeong, 2019; Warrner et al., 2016).

Ceravolo et al. (2012) developed a 60- to 90-min workshop focusing on communication skills, awareness of inappropriate behaviors, and conflict resolution as individual-level strategies. Similar to the CREW program (Leiter et al., 2012; Osatuke et al., 2009; Spence Laschinger et al., 2012), this intervention aimed to foster organization-wide cultural change through individual-level strategies, with workshops delivered across the organization. Managers attended the workshop first, as they were expected to model the skills and behaviors for their teams. Over 5,100 workers participated in this program and analysis of pre- and post-test data (N = 485) indicated positive outcomes, including a reduction in verbal abuse, turnover, and vacancy rates, alongside improvements in perceptions of a respectful, supportive, and safe workplace culture as well as a greater determination to address workplace mistreatment. Gedro and Wang (2013) evaluated the effectiveness of a 90- to 180-min interactive workshop for addressing workplace incivility. The workshop consisted of two parts. The first part focused on educating participants about workplace incivility and related mistreatment, while the second part involved interactive discussions on the impact of negative behaviors and small group work using case studies and scenarios. Although more than 800 workers participated in this workshop, its effectiveness was not systematically evaluated. However, anecdotal evidence suggests increased knowledge and understanding of workplace incivility.

Mallette et al. (2011) compared the effectiveness of four interventions designed to combat lateral violence. Intervention Group 1 used a workbook on lateral violence; Group 2 completed a self-directed e-learning module; Group 3 engaged in virtual role-play, practice, and feedback; and Group 4 combined self-directed e-learning with virtual role-play and feedback. Pre- and post-intervention surveys (N = 164) showed that participants in Groups 1, 2, and 4 reported increased knowledge of lateral violence and greater confidence in responding to it. However, none of the interventions significantly improved participants' ability to recognize and manage lateral violence. Goldberg (2007) evaluated the impact of a two-hour sexual harassment training session focusing on terminology, legislation, court decisions, and the consequences of workplace sexual harassment. The training also covered victim responses and their effects. Pre- and post-test analysis of participants in both the intervention and control groups (N = 234) indicated that the training was ineffective. Participants reported a reduced intention to confront or report potential perpetrators, particularly among those with high conflict avoidance tendencies.

Griffin (2004) implemented a two-hour intervention to address lateral violence among nurses, consisting of an educational presentation and an interactive cognitive rehearsal session where participants practiced responses to common forms of lateral violence. At the end of the session, participants received cueing cards that described appropriate responses to ten common forms of lateral violence. Post-intervention focus groups with (N = 26) suggested increased awareness of lateral violence and greater empowerment to confront violent colleagues. Although these results were somewhat unclear, there was a positive impact on nurse retention. Warrner et al. (2016) evaluated an abbreviated version of Griffin's intervention. This 45-min session introduced workplace incivility, explained cognitive rehearsal techniques, and provided examples of appropriate responses. Participants were given cueing cards but did not have the opportunity participate in interactive practice. Analysis of pre- and post-test data from participants (N = 114) showed a reduction in general and physician incivility but no change in awareness of incivility or in incidents involving nurses, supervisors, patients, or visitors.

Kang and Jeong (2019) developed a smartphone application to teach nurses effective strategies for addressing workplace bullying. The app introduced non-violent communication principles and engaged participants in cognitive rehearsal exercises. Pre- and post-test analyses from participants (N = 36) and a control group (N = 36) revealed reductions in person- and work-related bullying experiences and decreased turnover intentions. However, there were no significant changes in experiences of intimidation-related bullying.

Target- and Bystander-Focused Secondary Educational Interventions

Stagg et al. (2011) developed the only identified secondary educational intervention that simultaneously targets workers experiencing and witnessing workplace bullying. This two-hour intervention includes an introduction to the concept

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and theoretical frameworks of workplace bullying, a review of relevant organizational policies, an explanation of cognitive rehearsal techniques, and a description of adequate responses to workplace bullying. The session concludes with a cognitive rehearsal component, allowing participants to practice these responses in simulated scenarios. Participants were also given cueing cards outlining effective responses to common bullying behaviors. Analysis of pre- and post-test data from the 62 participants revealed several positive outcomes, including increased awareness of bullying behaviors, improved knowledge of bullying management strategies, higher likelihood of reporting both observed and perpetrated bullying, and an enhanced sense of confidence in managing bullying situations. However, the intervention did not lead to an increased perceived ability among participants to defend themselves against a bully.

Multi-Timecourse Educational Interventions

Seven of the educational interventions we reviewed were classified as multi-timecourse, addressing different stages of workplace mistreatment prevention and management. Five interventions combined primary and secondary approaches, focusing on both the prevention of workplace mistreatment and the mitigation of its effects (Baixauli et al., 2020; Barrett et al., 2009; Bingham & Scherer, 2001). Two interventions integrated secondary and tertiary strategies, aiming not only to address existing mistreatment but also to support recovery and prevent recurrence (Barak, 1994; Holme, 2006).

Primary and Secondary Multi-timecourse Educational Interventions

Several interventions were designed to address workplace mistreatment at both the primary (prevention) and secondary (mitigation) levels. Chipps and McRury (2012), Bingham and Scherer (2001), and Baixauli et al. (2020) evaluated educational interventions at the individual level, while Barrett et al. (2009) and Lasater et al. (2015) targeted both individual and team levels. Chipps and McRury's (2012) implemented a three-month educational, behavioral, and skill-building program aimed at increasing participants' awareness and understanding of workplace bullying and negative acts. The program helped participants identify personality types and conflict preferences, set individual goals, and provided a toolkit for addressing workplace incivility. Despite the use of a small sample size and the absence of a control group, pre- and post-test analysis showed a decrease in reported workplace bullying but also an unexpected increase in the experience of negative acts.

Bingham and Scherer (2001) designed a 30-min intervention to address sexual harrasment consisting of three components. A recorded speech emphasized the organization's zero-tolerance stance on sexual harassment, explained its negative consequences, and underlined the importance of reporting occurrences and disciplining perpetrators. Handouts and an oral presentation explained the concept of sexual harassment in more detail, disencouraged engagement in sexual harassment, encouraged reporting incidents, and further explained the consequences of instigating sexual harassment. A subsequent five-minute discussion allowed participants to ask questions for clarification. Despite the inclusion of a relatively large sample size and a control group, the intervention was largely ineffective and, in some respects, counterproductive. Although participants' knowledge about sexual harassment increased, male participants perceived lower occurrences of coercion, were more likely to blame victims, and were less willing to report sexual harassment compared to non-participating men. Female participants showed no significant differecces from non-participating women in blame attributions or willingness to report sexual harassment.

Baixauli et al. (2020) developed a two-day educational and skill-building program consisting of ten one-hour sessions delivered to middle managers. The first session focused on recognizing workplace bullying behaviors, the second addressed conflict management and role conflict, and the remaining sessions provided conflict resolution and mediation training. The intervention significantly reduced the effects of bullying among participants experiencing medium to high levels of bullying, with improvements in self-expression, quality of occupational life, and bullying management strategies. No significant changes were observed in the control group or among participants who experienced lower levels of bullying. The outcomes were further influenced by managerial responsibility, with high-responsibility managers showing greater improvement.

The interventions by Barrett et al. (2009) and Lasater et al. (2015) targeted both team and individual levels. Barrett et al. (2009) conducted two two-hour interactive education and skill-building sessions with work units, focusing on team building, conflict management, and feedback to prevent lateral violence. Using a relatively small sample without a control group, pre- and post-test analyses indicated increased group cohesion and improved co-worker interactions. However, there were no significant improvements in overall group dynamics and functioning. Lasater et al. (2015) implemented a three-part educational intervention addressing workplace incivility over a six-month period. The first session aimed to raise participants' awareness and understanding of workplace incivility, while the second session introduced intervention strategies tailored to each work team based on previously gathered information. The third session, which was non-mandatory, provided participants with the opportunity to practice the skills and strategies from the earlier sessions in simulated scenarios. Multiple post-test

evaluations revealed a decreased perception of workplace incivility and increased self-efficacy among participants. However, participants also reported a decline in collective efficacy for managing workplace incivility.

Secondary and Tertiary Multi-timecourse Educational Interventions

Barak (1994) and Holme (2006) evaluated interventions aimed not only at addressing workplace mistreatment (secondary intervention), but also to sustain treatment outcomes and prevent recurrence (tertiary intervention). Barak (1994) developed a one-day workshop aimed at helping 25 female employees combat sexual harassment in the workplace. The intervention combined an educational component—focused on increasing participants' knowledge and understanding of sexual harassment—with a cognitive-modification component designed to enhance coping skills. This latter component involved group discussions, role-playing, modeling, and simulation activities. Post-intervention survey results from a subset of participants (N = 6) indicated increased confidence in coping with sexual harassment and a reduction in the severity of harassment experienced.

Holme (2006) implemented a training and counseling program to support the introduction of a new organizational policy on bullying and harassment. The intervention required all managers to participate in training sessions, with a subset receiving additional counseling to reinforce their responsibility in implementing the policy. Additionally, a selection of non-managerial employees received training to enable them to support and advise colleagues experiencing harassment or bullying. Post-test results from participants (N = 22) demonstrated increased knowledge and understanding of bullying and harassment within the organization.

Experiential Interventions for Workplace Mistreatment

Experiential interventions in the workplace involve hands-on activities—such as role-playing and simulations—designed to promote skill development and behavioral change. These interventions emphasize learning through direct experience and reflection, consistent with Kolb's (1984) experiential learning theory. Seven interventions included in this review are experiential in nature, comprising three primary, one secondary, one tertiary, and two multi-timecourse interventions. A summary of the experiential interventions is provided in Table 3.

Primary Experiential Interventions

Three primary experiential interventions focused on different forms of workplace mistreatment. Ramsey and Jones (2015) evaluated a mindfulness-based workshop aimed at reducing workplace ostracism, while Locklear et al. (2021) conducted two studies on gratitude journaling to prevent workplace incivility, gossip and ostracism. In Ramsey and Jones's (2015) intervention, 22 participants attended in-person workshops involving discussions on workplace issues and exercises in mindfulness-based stress reduction, reflection, and attention. Pre- and post-test analyses, in comparison with a control group, showed a significant decrease in instigated ostracism among participants. Locklear et al. (2021) conducted two randomized field experiments, demonstrating that gratitude journaling reduced instigated workplace incivility, gossip, and ostracism by enhancing participants' self-control resources. The intervention was especially effective for participants who perceived strong workplace norms supporting expressions of gratitude.

Secondary Experiential Interventions

Kirk et al. (2011) investigated the impact of an expressive writing intervention on instigated workplace incivility. Participants in the intervention group wrote for 20 min at the end of each workday for three days, reflecting on their thoughts and feelings about meaningful workplace events. Control group participants wrote about unrelated topics. Pre- and post-test analyses (N = 46) revealed that the intervention increased emotional intelligence and positive affect, while reducing both perpetrated incivility and experienced incivility among individuals who initially reported low levels of workplace incivility. Additionally, the intervention improved emotional self-esteem for those with initially low or moderate—but not high—levels of emotional self-esteem.

Tertiary Experiential Interventions

Quiun and Herrero (2022) developed a coaching and training program to support the recovery of workplace bullying targets. The program included online coaching, workshops on non-violent communication, emotional awareness, and emotion regulation related to workplace bullying, as well as group meditation sessions. Pre- and post-intervention analyses of data from seven participants showed reductions in negative thoughts and improvements in coping skills, self-esteem, and personal growth. However, no significant changes were observed in participants' overall well-being, rumination, or reflection.

Multi-timecourse Experiential Interventions

The two multi-timecourse experiential interventions we identified combined secondary and tertiary interventions. Quinlan (2010) and Quinlan et al. (2020) examined the effects of theater-based workshops on workplace

Table 3 Experiential interventions for workplace mistreatment

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Ramsey and Jones (2015) (Study 1)	Ostracism	Experiential	Mindfulness	–	Individual	Instigator	22	Age: 24 to 72 years (average 45.76) Gender: 78.43% women and 21.57% men Race/ethnicity: 92% Caucasian, 2% African American, 2% Hispanic, 2% Asian/ Pacific Islander, 2% undisclosed Job tenure: average 11.66 years	Primary	Reduced ostracism ($\beta = -0.451^{**}$)	Effective	Control group; Pre and post test	37
Locklear et al. (2021) (Study 1)	Incivility	Experiential	Writing	10 days	Individual	Instigator	88	Gender: 59% women Race/ethnicity: 63.5% Caucasian; Job tenure: average 10 years	Primary	Reduced incivility via self-control resources ($\beta = -0.10^{*}$; 95% CI [−0.20, −0.01]). Increased resources for self-control	Effective	Randomized field experiment; Pre and post test	147

Table 3 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Locklear et al. (2021) (Study 2)	Incivility, gossip, and ostracism	Experiential	Writing	10 days	Individual	Instigator	112	Gender: 67.4% women Race/ethnicity: 78.6% Caucasian; Job tenure: average 8.3 years	Primary	Reduced incivility via self-control resources ($\beta = -0.08^{**}$; 95% CI [−0.17, −0.03]). Reduced gossip via self-control resources ($\beta = -0.11^{**}$; 95% CI [−0.22, −0.03]). Reduced ostracism via self-control resources ($\beta = -0.04^{**}$; 95% CI [−0.10, −0.01])	Effective	Randomized field experiment; Pre and post test	204

Table 3 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Kirk et al. (2011)	Incivility	Experiential	Expressive writing	3 times 20 min	Individual	General	49	Age: 19 to 62 years (mean 35.1); Gender: 71.74% women and 28.26% men; Education: school certificate to doctorate (45.7% bachelor's degree or higher); Job tenure: 2 months to 13 years (mean 3.1)	Secondary	Increased emotional intelligence; Increased positive affect; No change in negative affect; Decreased perpetrated incivility; Decreased experienced incivility for those who initially scored low (but not moderate or high) on workplace incivility; Increased emotional self-esteem for those who initially scored low or moderate (but not high) on emotional self-esteem	Partially effective	Control group; Pre and post test	46
Quinlan et al. (2020)	Harassment	Experiential	Theatre workshop	2 days	Individual	Bystander	29	Gender: majority women Experience: 3 months to 41 years	Multi-timecourse: Secondary, tertiary	Increased understanding of harassment; Improved patterns of social interaction; Increased ability to support targets of harassment	Effective	No control group; Post test only	11

Table 3 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Quinlan (2010)	Bullying	Experiential	Theatre workshop	1 day	Individual	Target	13	Gender: 100% women Race/ethnicity: 50% First Nations	Multi-timecourse: Secondary, tertiary	Increased knowledge and understanding of bullying; Improved ability to recognize and resolve bullying situations	Effective	No control group; Post test only	–
Quiun and Herrero (2022)	Bullying	Experiential	Coaching and meditation	–	Individual	Target	7	Age: mean 51.86 years Gender: 57.14% women and 42.86% men	Tertiary	Decreased negative thoughts; Increased coping skills, self-esteem, and personal growth; No change in well-being, rumination, or reflection	Partially effective	No control group; Pre and post test	7

mistreatment. The first intervention was a one-day workshop focused on targets of workplace bullying. Participants engaged in interactive activities based on their personal experiences of being bullied, creating scenes and tableaux to explore the characteristics and impacts of bullying while testing strategies for addressing such situations. The workshop concluded with a two-hour performance followed by a discussion with the audience. Interviews with participants indicated improved recognition of situations that might lead to bullying and increased ability to prevent such situations from developing. Audience members also reported a deeper understanding of the complexities surrounding workplace bullying (Quinlan, 2010). The second intervention, a two-day theatrical workshop, focused on bystanders and aimed to address workplace harassment (Quinlan et al., 2020). Participants developed sculptures and scenarios reflecting their everyday experiences with workplace harassment. Interviews with 11 participants revealed increased awareness and understanding of workplace bullying, along with enhanced skills in to recognizing and resolving bullying situations.

Informational Interventions

Informational interventions refer to strategies aimed at influencing knowledge, attitudes, or behaviors by providing factual or instructional content information. These interventions typically involve disseminating materials such as posters, brochures, guidelines, or digital content that outline specific behaviors, policies, or procedures. They rely on passive learning and the assumption that increased awareness, and understanding will lead to behavior change. Döbrich et al. (2014) studied the impact of debiasing warnings on age discrimination in performance appraisals and hiring decisions. In the first experiment, HR professionals evaluated the performance of younger (28 years) and older (59 years) male and female sales employees based on manipulated scenarios. Participants in the direct debiasing condition received explicit warnings about age-related biases and discrimination before completing their evaluations, while those in the control group did not. Results (N = 176) showed that direct debiasing information significantly reduced age discrimination in performance appraisals. In the second experiment, the researchers tested the effects of both direct debiasing (explicit warnings) and indirect debiasing (holding decision-makers accountable) on hiring decisions. Participants made hypothetical hiring decisions about younger and older male and female job candidates. Results (N = 384) indicated that direct debiasing information reduced age discrimination toward both male and female job candidates, whereas indirect debiasing information reduced age discrimination only toward male job candidates.

Integrative Interventions

Five interventions included in this review adopted an integrative approach, combining elements from multiple strategies—such as informational, educational, and experiential methods—to address workplace mistreatment in a comprehensive manner. We identified one secondary integrative intervention (Meloni & Austin, 2011) and four multi-timecourse integrative interventions (Mikkelsen et al., 2011; Stevens, 2002; Strandmark & Rahm, 2014). A summary of the integrative interventions is provided in Table 4.

Secondary Integrative Interventions

Meloni and Austin (2011) evaluated the implementation of the "Zero Tolerance of Bullying and Harassment" program in an Australian healthcare organization. The program began with the creation of a self-nominated employee working group tasked with guiding its development and implementation. Key components included policy changes, training sessions for Workplace Equity Officers, the establishment of support networks, and awareness campaigns through posters. Additionally, a session on bullying and harassment was incorporated into the organization's orientation program and manual for new employees. Comparison of pre- and post-intervention employee satisfaction surveys showed increased awareness of bullying and harassment, along with improvements in employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Multi-timecourse Integrative Interventions

Of the four multi-timecourse integrative interventions we identified, three combined primary and secondary approaches (Mikkelsen et al., 2011; Stevens, 2002; Strandmark & Rahm, 2014), while one combined secondary and tertiary interventions (Pate & Beaumont, 2010).

Primary and Secondary Integrative Interventions

Stevens (2002) and Strandmark and Rahm (2014) studied integrative approaches at both the organization and team levels to address workplace bullying, while Mikkelsen et al. (2011) focused on organization level strategies targeting bullying and interpersonal conflict.

Stevens (2002) evaluated an intervention that integrated policy changes, education, performance management, and conflict resolution training. The program primarily targeted managers and work teams, recognizing the influential role managers play in shaping both unit-level and organizational

Table 4 Informational and integrative interventions for workplace mistreatment

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Döbrich et al. (2014) (Study 2)	Discrimination (age-based)	Informational	Direct and indirect debiasing warnings	–	Individual	Instigator	384	Age: 20 to 75 (mean 36.16 Gender: 50% women and 50% men	Primary	Decreased age discrimination toward older men in hiring decisions; No decrease in age discrimination toward older women in hiring decisions	Partially effective	Randomized control group / Post test only	384
Döbrich et al. (2014) (Study 1)	Discrimination (age-based)	Informational	Direct debiasing warnings	–	Individual	Instigator	176	Age: 22 to 77 years (mean 42.18 Gender: 50% women and 50% men	Primary	Decreased age discrimination in performance appraisal	Partially effective	Randomized control group / Post test only	176
Stevens (2002)	Bullying	Integrative	Policy, training	–	Multilevel (organization, team, individual)	General	–	–	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Decreased turnover rate	Unclear	–	–
Strandmark and Rahm (2014)	Bullying	Integrative	Policy, training	–	Multilevel (organization, team, individual)	General	–	Age: 32 to 64 years; Gender: 92.31% women and 7.69% men	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Increased awareness of bullying; Increased confidence to address inappropriate behavior; Improved collaboration and work sphere; Mixed levels of perceived commitment to the program form management	Partially effective	No control group; Pre and post test	29

Table 4 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Mikkelsen et al. (2011)	Bullying and interpersonal conflict	Integrative	Training, support meetings, networks, communication tools	–	Organization	General	421	–	Multi-time-course: Primary, secondary	Participants were positive about the content of the course, but they questioned whether (a) their employees could relate it to their everyday work, their acquired knowledge would come to use, their acquired knowledge would benefit the rest of the organization; they had acquired enough conflict management skills. Participants were positive about the dialogue meetings as they created a sense of shared responsibility for creating and maintaining a positive work environment	Unclear	No control group; Pre and post test	–

Table 4 (continued)

Study	Mistreatment form	Intervention				Aimed at	No. of participants	Demographics	Timecourse	Results / Effect Sizes	Effectiveness	Study design	Sample size
		Type	Sub-type/ Format	Duration	Level								
Meloni and Austin (2011)	Bullying and harassment	Integrative	Policy, training, support networks, communication tools	–	Organization	General	1200	–	Secondary	Increased awareness of bullying and harassment; Increased employee engagement and satisfaction	Effective	No control group; Pre & post test	710
Pate and Beaumont (2010)	Bullying and harassment	Integrative	Policy implementation and mandatory training	–	Organization	General	200	–	Multi-timecourse: Secondary, tertiary	Decreased perceived level of bullying; no change in trust in management	Partially effective	No control group; Pre and post test	> 100

environments. Managers and supervisors attended full-day workshops to discuss the impact of workplace bullying, develop strategies to address it across the organization, and draft new policies on bullying behaviors. Supervisors also received performance management and conflict resolution training. Additionally, upper management committed to regular engagement with work units and disseminated information about the intervention through newsletters. Although detailed results of the intervention are unclear, the organization's average turnover rate decreased from 28.4% to 21.9% within three years of the intervention's implementation. Strandmark and Rahm (2014) developed a workplace bullying intervention in collaboration with employees, incorporating elements at the organizational, team, and individual levels. Focus group meetings with employees helped define and explore workplace bullying, while educational seminars aimed to increase knowledge about bullying, its consequences, communication, and conflict management. During these seminars, employees also practiced initiating conversations about bullying and participated in a card game addressing bullying behaviors and potential responses. Subsequent focus groups contributed to an action plan approved by management, which all work teams were expected to follow. As part of the plan, new employees were assigned mentors for support. Focus groups and interviews indicated increased awareness of bullying, greater confidence in addressing inappropriate behavior, and improved collaboration and work environments.

Mikkelsen et al. (2011) co-developed an intervention program with a steering-group comprising key managers and employees, who contributed to both the design and evaluation of the program. The intervention included lectures for employees on workplace bullying, its causes and consequences, and prevention strategies; a two-day conflict prevention and management program for managers; dialogue meetings to discuss psychosocial issues in the workplace and potential solutions; and the distribution of posters, newsletters, and pamphlets on workplace bullying. Additionally, coaching sessions were provided for steering group members. Post-intervention group interviews revealed that participants benefited most from the dialogue meetings and the conflict management training. However, participants also reported several barriers to successful implementation of the intervention, including low management commitment, poor planning and organization, weak identification with bullying issues, cultural factors, and external influences.

Secondary and Tertiary Integrative Interventions

Pate and Beaumont (2010) evaluated Dignity at Work, a comprehensive organizational policy intervention designed to address workplace bullying and harassment. The policy outlined definitions and examples of bullying and

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harassment, included a zero-tolerance statement, clarified employee roles and responsibilities at all organizational levels, detailed information regarding the consequences of policy breaches, provided formal and informal resolution procedures, established employee support mechanisms, and committed to ongoing policy reviews. The intervention was implemented in three phases. First, existing reports of bullying were investigated, and consequences for policy breaches were enforced, including the termination of employees found guilty of bullying. Second, all employees participated in mandatory training sessions introducing the policy and detailing its implementation process. Finally, the Dignity at Work policy was integrated into the organization's processes and values to ensure long-term sustainability. Comparison of pre- and post-intervention employee satisfaction surveys indicated a significant reduction in bullying across the organization. However, trust in senior management remained unchanged.

Figure 3 presents a framework of all the interventions and mistreatment forms discussed in our review, illustrating which interventions are applicable to specific categories of workplace mistreatment.

Key Considerations for Designing and Implementing Effective Interventions

Based on our review and analysis of 40 intervention studies, we identified five key areas that researchers and practitioners should consider when designing and implementing workplace interventions.

Organizational Culture and Cultural Change

Organizational culture profoundly influences employee behavior, attitudes, and the overall work environment, making it a crucial factor in the design and implementation of interventions targeting workplace mistreatment. Kuntz and Searle (2023) highlighted this by showing that their educational intervention for workplace incivility and bullying led to short-term improvements in psychological safety, incivility norms, bystander efficacy, and intentions to intervene. However, these gains were not sustained after two months, likely due to the absence of broader cultural and accountability changes at the organizational level. Similarly, Gamian-Wilk et al. (2022) identified organizational culture as a significant barrier to the success of their intervention aimed at preventing and addressing workplace bullying and interpersonal conflict.

The influence of organizational culture on responses to sexual harassment is also well-documented. Barak (1994) and Goldberg (2007) found that in organizations with a permissive harassment culture, targets often fear retaliation, whereas in environments characterized by accountability and respect, reporting inappropriate behaviors is normalized. Cultures that condone disrespect, aggressive competition, or hierarchical dominance can perpetuate mistreatment, undermining the effectiveness of individual-focused interventions. Conversely, interventions that strengthen or transform organizational culture can foster inclusive environments that discourage mistreatment and promote respectful interactions.

Focusing on organizational culture is critical for sustained commitment and compliance at all levels. Understanding and integrating organizational culture into workplace mistreatment interventions is essential for achieving lasting and meaningful change.

Leadership Commitment and Support

Leaders play a pivotal role in shaping organizational behavior and culture through their actions, decisions, and communication. Leadership commitment and support are crucial for the successful implementation and sustainability of workplace mistreatment interventions, as highlighted in several studies (e.g., Barrett et al., 2009; Kuntz & Searle, 2023; Mikkelsen et al., 2011; Strandmark & Rahm, 2014). When leaders visibly endorse efforts to prevent, address, and sustain interventions that target workplace mistreatment, it signals to employees that such behaviors are unacceptable, and that the organization is committed to fostering a respectful culture. Leadership engagement also secures critical resources—such as time, funding, and personnel—to develop, implement, and maintain effective interventions. Furthermore, active participation from leaders encourages employee engagement and compliance, as employees are more likely to support initiatives championed by top management.

As an example, Barrett et al. (2009) found that an educational intervention to prevent lateral violence was most effective in work teams led by highly engaged managers who clearly articulated their expectations. The study emphasized the importance of leaders in establishing proper processes, defining and communicating role expectations, and exemplifying respectful communication. Without visible leadership commitment, interventions risk being perceived as superficial or insincere, thereby undermining their overall effectiveness. As another example, Kuntz and Searle (2023) attributed the short-lived positive effects of their educational intervention targeting workplace incivility and bullying to a misalignment between the goals of the intervention and the behaviors of organizational leaders. They found that the absence of management in training sessions and the persistence of incivility perpetrated by managers eroded the initial gains in bystander attitudes. Participants reported that managerial behaviors remained a significant issue, and the lack of leadership involvement was seen as a barrier to

sustained intervention success. As yet another example, Pate and Beaumont (2010) found that, even when senior managers listened to employee concerns and took action to address bullying and harassment, trust in senior management did not significantly improve over time. Despite the intervention's effectiveness in reducing workplace mistreatment, employees may have viewed it as a one-off effort, awaiting further evidence of leadership competence and sustained change before increasing their trust.

These findings underscore that leadership commitment must extend beyond initial intervention efforts to ensure long-term, meaningful change. Ongoing support from leaders is critical for embedding interventions into organizational culture and fostering sustained reductions in workplace mistreatment.

Employee Involvement

Employee involvement is essential for the successful implementation and effectiveness of interventions addressing workplace mistreatment. First, ensuring that employees at all levels actively participate in the intervention promotes consistent education and behavioral change across the organization. Embree et al. (2013) noted challenges in recruiting participants when intervention participation is optional, suggesting that discomfort with the topic or competing time demands may deter involvement. Similarly, Lee Smith and Kelloway (2016) highlighted the limitations of voluntary training and recommend making training mandatory to achieve optimal outcomes. They further emphasized the advantages of online training tools, which offer flexibility and convenience, allowing staff to complete at their own pace and from any location, thereby increasing participation rates.

Second, involving employees in the design and development of interventions fosters a sense of ownership and commitment to the change process. Meloni and Austin (2011) emphasized the importance of employee involvement in change management, recommending that organizations solicit feedback and contributions at all stages of development and implementation. When employees have direct input, interventions are more likely to address the actual needs and dynamics of the workplace, enhancing their relevance and effectiveness. This participatory approach also helps identify specific issues and practical solutions that might be overlooked by management or third-party consultants. Furthermore, involving employees promotes transparency and trust, increasing their willingness to engage with and support intervention strategies.

In summary, employee involvement not only enhances the design and implementation of interventions but also strengthens organizational commitment to reducing workplace mistreatment. Including employees at every level of the organization, in both participation and development of interventions is thus central to implementation success.

Multi-level Interventions

Several researchers noted that interventions must address multiple levels—individual, job, and organizational—to achieve significant and lasting positive effects (e.g., Ceravolo et al., 2012; Chipps & McRury, 2012; McDermott et al., 2021; Stevens, 2002). Studies implementing multi-level interventions have credited this approach as crucial for effectiveness (e.g., Ceravolo et al., 2012; Chipps & McRury, 2012; Strandmark & Rahm, 2014). While interventions targeting individuals—such as raising awareness or teaching appropriate responses to mistreatment—can be valuable, they often fall short of producing broader organizational change. For instance, Stevens (2002) emphasized that bullying is deeply ingrained in organizational culture, making it not just an individual or group problem. Consequently, effective interventions must also address team dynamics and organizational structures to prevent or reduce (consequence of) mistreatment. For example, individual-level interventions should be complemented by organizational policies, accountability measures, and grievance processes that promote social change (Barak, 1994). Addressing job-related demands and stressors, such as unrealistic role expectations or unclear responsibilities, can also mitigate factors contributing to mistreatment.

Additionally, social support systems and leadership training can improve team functioning and the immediate work environment. McDermott et al. (2021) recommended a multi-level approach that includes social support systems, leadership training, zero-tolerance policies, and an organization-wide commitment to cultural change, alongside individual-level interventions focused on education and cognitive rehearsal. Similarly, Ramsey and Jones (2015) suggested that mindfulness practices—initially used at the individual level to reduce instigated workplace ostracism—could be extended to teams or implemented organization wide. Furthermore, Stagg et al. (2011) found that many participants were unaware of reporting procedures for workplace mistreatment due to the absence of a workplace bullying policy. They recommended adopting explicit policies that communicate zero tolerance for such behaviors and outline clear procedures for reporting and managing incidents.

In sum, interventions focused solely on individual-level change may yield limited results, as they fail to address the systemic, organizational factors that contribute to workplace mistreatment. A comprehensive, multi-level strategy—encompassing individual education, team dynamics, and organizational policies—is essential for creating lasting cultural change and fostering a respectful, supportive work environment.

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Continued Commitment

The success of workplace interventions hinges not only on their initial implementation but also on sustained commitment over time. Ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation are essential to ensuring that interventions remain effective and responsive to evolving workplace dynamics. Ongoing commitment also signals to employees that the organization is genuinely dedicated to fostering a respectful culture and a psychologically safe work environment, rather than merely complying with temporary or superficial measures. Ceravolo et al. (2012) emphasized that eliminating workplace mistreatment requires sustained, organization-wide effort. Similarly, Chipps and McRury (2012) highlighted the role of continuing education in maintaining the long-term effectiveness of interventions, while Gedro and Wang (2013) called for regular reviews to assess intervention quality and outcomes.

Regular training sessions, consistent reinforcement of organizational policies, and robust feedback mechanisms are vital for embedding positive behaviors and cultural norms into an organization. These practices not only reinforce the desired changes but also ensure that interventions evolve alongside the organization's needs. A long-term commitment also facilitates the systematic collection and analysis of data to assess the impact and effectiveness of interventions, enabling evidence-based refinements.

In sum, without sustained attention, interventions risk becoming obsolete or losing momentum, thereby allowing harmful cultural norms and patterns of mistreatment to resurface. Conversely, a sustained, organization-wide commitment builds a resilient, respectful workplace culture, ensuring that positive changes are not only implemented but deeply ingrained and enduring.

Intervention Characteristics

The format, duration, timecourse, and other structural characteristics of interventions are critical considerations in the effective design and implementation of both new and adapted workplace mistreatment interventions. We argue that participation should be mandatory to reinforce a shared responsibility for organizational culture. In addition, mechanisms for regularly soliciting feedback must be embedded within the intervention structure to support continuous improvement. Interventions should be strategically integrated into daily work processes, with ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation. For example, in interventions such as CREW, a six-month duration with multiple, spaced sessions is recommended to support meaningful behavioral change and cultural integration.

Effective delivery should be multi-modal, combining formal elements (e.g., workshops, facilitated discussions) with informal, embedded practices (e.g., team check-ins, role modelling) to normalise and reinforce positive behaviors in daily routines. Furthermore, interventions should operate across multiple levels—targeting individual behaviors and skills, job design and interpersonal dynamics, and broader organizational systems. This multi-level approach may involve the integration of educational components, cognitive rehearsal techniques, and leadership development alongside robust policies, clearly communicated grievance procedures, and well-defined accountability mechanisms grounded in a zero-tolerance approach. Finally, interventions must be comprehensive and multi-timecourse in nature, combining both primary and secondary, or secondary and tertiary elements to address workplace mistreatment proactively and responsibly.

Conclusions and Directions for Future Research

Despite the high prevalence of workplace mistreatment (e.g., Dhanani et al., 2021; Schilpzand et al., 2016), its well-documented detrimental effects on both victims and witnesses (e.g., Han et al., 2022; Hershcovis, 2011; Park & Martinez, 2022), and the substantial financial burden it imposes on organizations (e.g., Hassard et al., 2018; Paulin & Griffin, 2017), there remains a surprising scarcity of research on the implementation and effectiveness of interventions aimed at preventing, treating, and sustaining treatment for such mistreatment. This gap is particularly notable when contrasted with the extensive body of work examining its antecedents and consequences. Addressing this gap is critical for fostering psychologically safe work environments that support employee mental health and well-being. This systematic review highlights this gap in the literature and offers scholars and practitioners an overview of more and less effective interventions, along with key considerations for developing and implementing future interventions. It also identifies several promising directions for future research.

First, the literature on workplace mistreatment suffers from a lack of conceptual clarity, marked by an overabundance of overlapping and inconsistently used terms (e.g., Hershcovis, 2011; Tepper & Henle, 2011; Walsh & Magley, 2014). This ambiguity extends to intervention research, where terms are often used interchangeably to refer to distinct forms of mistreatment, or conversely, a single term is used to describe multiple forms of mistreatment. As a result, it is often unclear which specific forms of workplace mistreatment an intervention is designed to address. This lack of conceptual precision also hinders the measurement of intervention effectiveness, as assessment tools may not align with the specific forms of mistreatment targeted by the intervention. Complicating matters further, various forms of

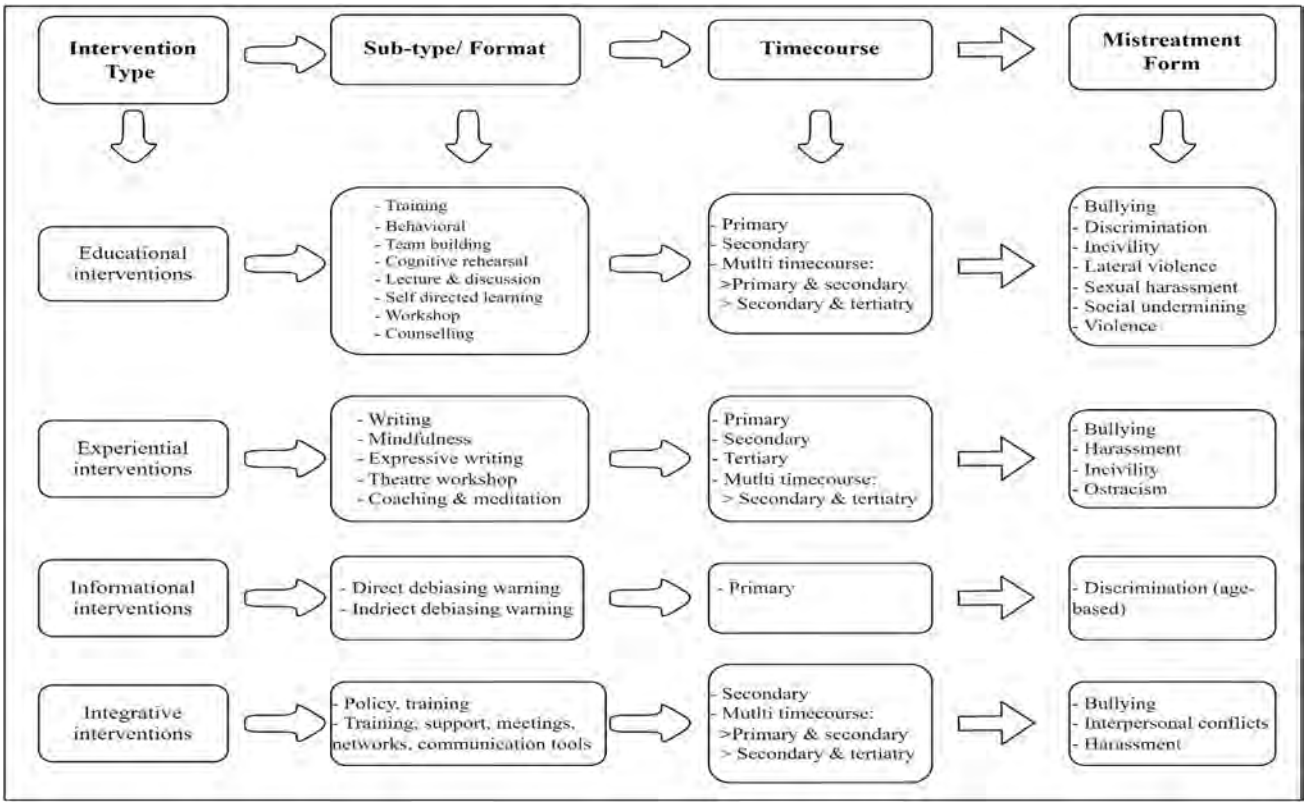

Fig. 3 Framework of interventions effective for addressing workplace mistreatment

workplace mistreatment tend to co-occur (Han et al., 2022; Lim & Cortina, 2005; Walsh & Magley, 2014), raising questions about whether interventions designed for one form may also impact others. To address these issues, future research must ensure conceptual clarity throughout the development, implementation, and evaluation of interventions. Researchers should employ valid, distinct measures for different forms of mistreatment in pre- and post-tests to assess both targeted and broader effects, yielding insights that could inform more comprehensive intervention strategies.

Second, many intervention studies in this field lack methodological rigor. Our review revealed that only about 40% of the studies employed control groups, and a mere 30% incorporated both pre- and post-intervention assessments. While some studies featured robust sample sizes (e.g., Bingham & Scherer, 2001; Döbrich et al., 2014; Leiter et al., 2012), sample sizes below 20 were not uncommon (e.g., Barak, 1994; Benmore et al., 2018; Quiun & Herrero, 2022), significantly limiting the generalizability and reliability of findings. These methodological shortcomings hinder the interpretation of results and highlight the need for more rigorous research designs. Future studies should prioritize randomized controlled trials, larger and more diverse samples, and consistent use of pre- and post-tests to ensure results are both interpretable and comparable across contexts.

Third, the absence of a unifying theoretical framework further limits the development and evaluation of workplace mistreatment interventions (e.g., Branch et al., 2013; Hodgins et al., 2014; Schilpzand et al., 2016). Our review revealed that only 12 of the 40 studies provided a theoretical rationale for the interventions under investigation, and these rationales varied widely. Given that most forms of workplace mistreatment—except ostracism—are inherently social in nature, future research could benefit from grounding interventions in theories related to social interactions, such as social exchange theory or social rules theory (Nielsen & Einarsen, 2018; Rai & Agarwal, 2016). Additionally, drawing from frameworks that explain the antecedents and consequences of specific forms of mistreatment may provide valuable insights for intervention design. Establishing clear theoretical foundations will not only enhance the methodological rigor of intervention research but also improve the reliability and validity of findings.

Finally, there is a pressing need to revisit and assess the effectiveness of established interventions. For instance, the CREW (Civility, Respect, and Engagement at Work) intervention has demonstrated effectiveness across three studies, increasing workplace civility, reducing supervisor incivility, and positively influencing worker empowerment and turnover intentions (Leiter et al., 2012; Spence Laschinger et al.,

2012). However, our review indicates that the most recent CREW studies were published over a decade ago. Further research should examine the replicability and generalizability of CREW across diverse industries and geographic contexts, while also exploring opportunities for refinement. For example, studies could investigate why CREW effectively reduces supervisor-instigated but not co-worker-instigated incivility—and use these insights to refine and tailor intervention components accordingly.

Finally, and in addition to established interventions, promising approaches such as gratitude journaling (Locklear et al., 2021), mindfulness practices (Ramsey & Jones, 2015), and informational interventions (Döbrich et al., 2014) warrant further empirical testing. These interventions are relatively simple to implement and may yield positive short-term outcomes, but their long-term effectiveness and scalability remain underexplored.

Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this review is the inclusion of only peer-reviewed studies published in English. This publication and language selection bias have excluded relevant workplace intervention research, such as conference papers, dissertations, unpublished studies, and work published in other languages. As a result, our findings may not fully capture the breadth and diversity of existing scholarship in this area. Like any research synthesis, this limitation may affect the generalizability of our conclusions and should be considered when interpreting the results.

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Data availability This study used published articles in the review and data that support the analyses and results are publicly available.

Declarations

Conflict of interest We, the authors, have no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

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Civility

HOME / CIVILITY

The AAUP has defended the right of faculty members to speak as citizens—that is, "to address the larger community with regard to any matter of social, political, economic or other interest without institutional discipline or restraint"—since its inception. Freedom of extramural utterance is a constitutive part of the American conception of academic freedom, and the AAUP has investigated and censured many institutions for dismissing faculty members over their extramural utterances. Recent calls by university administrators for civility have raised concerns over their potential to restrict extramural speech of faculty members. Some of these calls have claimed a relationship between civility in extramural utterances and in the classroom. Over the years, the Association has repeatedly addressed related concerns in policy statements, for which we provide central quotes and links to full statements below.

The Committee A Statement on Extramural Utterances observes that

[t]he controlling principle is that a faculty member's expression of opinion as a citizen cannot constitute grounds for dismissal unless it clearly demonstrates the faculty member's unfitness to serve.

While recent calls for civility have claimed to support the free expression of opinion, so long as they are civil, the statement *On Freedom of Expression and Campus Speech Codes* notes that

[s]ome may seek to defend a distinction between the regulation of the content of speech and the regulation of the manner (or style) of speech. We find this distinction untenable in practice because offensive style or opprobrious phrases may in fact have been chosen precisely for their expressive power.

Civility is at times invoked alongside or instead of the concept of collegiality. As the Association observed in its On Collegiality as a Criterion for Faculty Evaluation, such invocations may be at odds with principles of academic freedom:

[C]ollegiality may be confused with the expectation that a faculty member display 'enthusiasm' or 'dedication,' evince 'a constructive attitude' that will 'foster harmony,' or display an excessive deference to administrative or faculty decisions where these may require reasoned discussion. Such expectations are flatly contrary to elementary principles of academic freedom, which protect a faculty member's right to dissent from the judgments of colleagues and administrators.

Noting more generally that "all academic personnel decisions, including new appointments and renewal of existing appointments, should rest on considerations that demonstrably pertain to the effective performance of the academic's professional responsibilities," the statement on Ensuring Academic Freedom in Politically Controversial Personnel Decisions addresses the dangers with invoking civility in the context of such decisions, noting that

[p]olitically controversial academics are frequently found to be abrasive individuals who are difficult to work with. Consequently, lack of collegiality or incivility may easily become a pretext for the adverse evaluation of politically controversial academics.

In the context of the classroom, the AAUP in its *Freedom in the Classroom* addressed concerns over the invocation of "hostile learning environments," which "presupposes much more than blatant disrespect or harassment":

It assumes that students have a right not to have their most cherished beliefs challenged. This assumption contradicts the central purpose of higher education, which is to challenge students to think hard about their own perspectives, whatever those might be. It is neither harassment nor discriminatory treatment of a student to hold up to close criticism an idea or viewpoint the student has posited or advanced. Ideas that are germane to a subject under discussion in a classroom cannot be censored because a student with particular religious or political beliefs might be offended. Instruction cannot proceed in the atmosphere of fear that would be produced were a teacher to become subject to administrative sanction based upon the idiosyncratic reaction of one or more students.

While the AAUP has noted that "civility and tolerance are hallmarks of educated men and women" and that "serious breaches of civility" should be "condemn[ed]," it maintains that "adequate cause for a dismissal will be related, directly and substantially, to the fitness of faculty members in their professional capacities as teachers or researchers" and, further, that "consideration of the manner of expression is rarely appropriate to an assessment of academic fitness."

Other key Association policy statements relating to civility and the rights of professors include *On Trigger Warnings* and Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications.

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The State Bar *of California*

Guide to the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism

September 2026

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PART I. OVERVIEW

A. PURPOSE OF THE CIVILITY GUIDELINES

The California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism ("Civility Guidelines") are intended to promote professionalism, courtesy, and respect throughout the practice of law while supporting the fair and efficient administration of justice. The Civility Guidelines encourage attorneys to exercise sound professional judgment in their interactions with clients, other attorneys, courts, parties, and the public consistent with their professional responsibilities.

The Civility Guidelines are one component of California's broader framework for promoting professionalism through education and practical guidance. They complement statewide initiatives, including the mandatory civility MCLE requirement, the annual affirmation of the civility oath required by California Rules of Court, rule 9.7, and additional educational resources developed to assist attorneys in exercising sound professional judgment throughout their practice.

The Civility Guidelines remain distinct from the California Rules of Professional Conduct, which establish attorneys' mandatory obligations and the basis for professional discipline. The relationship between the Civility Guidelines and other governing authorities is addressed in Part I.D., Legal Status and Relationship to Other Authorities.

B. BACKGROUND AND DEVELOPMENT

1. Origins

California's efforts to promote attorney civility predate the current Civility Guidelines. In 1995, the State Bar's Futures Commission recommended that the State Bar take a leadership role in encouraging the development of a statewide civility code applicable to California attorneys. The Futures Commission noted that attorneys were subject to varying local civility standards and concluded that a statewide approach would provide greater consistency across jurisdictions.

In 2006, the Board of Governors appointed a task force of attorneys and judges to develop statewide civility guidelines. The task force reviewed existing civility and professionalism standards and developed proposed guidelines drawing on those sources. The proposal was refined through stakeholder input, public hearings, and a formal public comment process before the Board adopted the original Civility Guidelines in July 2007.

2. The 2021 Report of the California Civility Task Force

In 2021, the California Civility Task Force, a joint project of the California Lawyers Association and the California Judges Association, issued *Beyond the Oath: Recommendations for Improving Civility*. The report identified continuing concerns regarding incivility in the legal profession and

recommended several measures to promote civility, including changes to the attorney oath and Rules of Professional Conduct and a new civility-focused MCLE requirement.

3. Subsequent Developments

The State Bar submitted several of the task force's recommendations to the California Supreme Court for approval. On September 25, 2025, the Court approved amendments to California Rules of Court, rule 9.7, effective October 1, 2025, but denied related proposed amendments to the Rules of Professional Conduct, citing First Amendment vagueness concerns. These developments, and their relationship to the voluntary and aspirational nature of these Civility Guidelines, are addressed in Part I.D., Legal Status and Relationship to Other Authorities.

4. 2026 Revision of the Civility Guidelines

In 2026, the State Bar undertook a review of the Civility Guidelines to reflect developments in the legal profession since their adoption in 2007. The review considered developments in California case law, changes in legal practice and technology, and subsequent civility standards adopted by courts and bar associations throughout the state. The revised Civility Guidelines also reflect input from attorneys, judges, and other stakeholders with experience addressing civility and professionalism in the practice of law.

C. SUMMARY OF THE REVISIONS

The Civility Guidelines have been revised to preserve the purpose, and aspirational nature of the 2007 Civility Guidelines while reflecting developments in the practice of law, technology, attorney professionalism, and California law. The revisions are intended to modernize the Civility Guidelines without altering their fundamental purpose or creating new disciplinary standards or attorney obligations.

The principal revisions include:

Modernization of Language. The Civility Guidelines have been updated throughout to improve clarity, readability, and consistency. Terminology has been modernized to reflect contemporary legal practice while preserving the substance and intent of the original Civility Guidelines.

Technology and Modern Practice. The revised Civility Guidelines recognize the increasing role of technology in legal practice by incorporating guidance addressing electronic communications, remote and virtual proceedings, electronic discovery, and the appropriate use of emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence.

California Case Law. The revisions were informed by California appellate decisions addressing civility and professionalism, as discussed in Part I.D.

Organization and Clarity. The Civility Guidelines have been reorganized to improve consistency, eliminate outdated references, reduce duplication, and make the document easier to navigate and apply. The number and sequence of Sections have changed from the 2007 version; readers

and organizations that reference the Civility Guidelines by Section number should confirm they are citing to the current version. Additional examples have been included to provide practical guidance consistent with the aspirational purpose of the Civility Guidelines.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Mentorship. The revised Civility Guidelines address respectful conduct, elimination of bias, and the role of attorneys in mentoring and supporting newer members of the profession.

Continued Aspirational Purpose. The revisions do not alter the aspirational nature of the Civility Guidelines. They do not create new ethical duties, standards of care, or independent grounds for attorney discipline or civil liability. Rather, they continue to encourage professionalism and civility beyond the minimum standards established by the California Rules of Professional Conduct and other applicable law.

D. LEGAL STATUS AND RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER AUTHORITIES

California Rules of Court, rule 9.7 incorporates a commitment to dignity, courtesy, and integrity into the attorney oath and requires attorneys to annually declare their adherence to that commitment. The Civility Guidelines complement that commitment by describing, in practical terms, what civility looks like in day-to-day practice.

Attorneys must complete continuing education on civility as part of their existing MCLE requirement. The Civility Guidelines are not themselves an MCLE course, but they may serve as an educational resource for attorneys and for providers developing civility-focused MCLE programming.

The California Rules of Professional Conduct establish attorneys' mandatory ethical obligations and provide the basis for professional discipline. The Civility Guidelines do not modify, restate, or substitute for the California Rules of Professional Conduct. Where a Guideline addresses subject matter also governed by a Rule of Professional Conduct, the rule controls, and the Guideline should be read as encouraging conduct beyond what the rule independently requires. The Civility Guidelines do not establish an independent basis for attorney discipline.

California courts have recognized that attorney civility may bear on matters such as attorney fee awards and sanctions. In determining a reasonable attorney fee award, courts may consider civility as an aspect of attorney skill and may reduce a fee award based on uncivil conduct. (See, e.g., *Karton v. Ari Design & Construction, Inc.* (2021) 61 Cal.App.5th 734; *Snoeck v. ExakTime Innovations, Inc.* (2023) 96 Cal.App.5th 908.)

The Civility Guidelines do not have the force of law and are not binding on courts. Attorneys and courts may find them useful as a description of conduct the profession encourages, but the Civility Guidelines themselves create no legal right, remedy, or defense.

The State Bar Act and other applicable statutes and rules continue to govern the practice of law in California independent of these Civility Guidelines. Nothing in the Civility Guidelines is intended to alter, limit, or expand any statutory or regulatory obligation.

PART II. USING THE CIVILITY GUIDELINES

A. INTENDED AUDIENCE

The Civility Guidelines are written primarily for practicing attorneys in every area of law, but they are intended for a broader audience as well. Judges and other judicial officers may find the Civility Guidelines useful in identifying common civility concerns in litigation and in encouraging civility among the attorneys who appear before them. Courts may also reference or adopt the Civility Guidelines, as discussed further in Part II.C.

Local bar associations and other legal organizations may adopt or adapt the Civility Guidelines to address the needs of their communities or use them as a foundation for their own professionalism initiatives. Legal educators may draw on the Civility Guidelines in law school courses, MCLE programs, and other professional development settings. Members of the public may also consult the Civility Guidelines to understand the professional conduct attorneys are encouraged to observe.

B. ORGANIZATION OF THE CIVILITY GUIDELINES

The Civility Guidelines are organized into twenty-five sections. Together, they address attorneys' responsibilities to clients, opposing counsel, the courts, the legal profession, and the public.

The sections are organized as follows:

Section 1	Responsibilities to the Justice System
Section 2	Responsibilities to the Public and the Profession
Section 3	Responsibilities to the Client and Client Representation
Section 4	Communications about the Legal System
Section 5	Communications to and Regarding Other Counsel
Section 6	Punctuality
Section 7	Using Technology in Legal Matters
Section 8	Scheduling, Continuances and Extensions of Time
Section 9	Service of Papers
Section 10	Writings Submitted to the Court, Counsel or Other Parties
Section 11	Discovery
Section 12	Motion Practice
Section 13	Dealing with Nonparty Witnesses

Section 14	Ex Parte Communication with the Court
Section 15	Settlement and Alternative Dispute Resolution
Section 16	Conduct in Court
Section 17	Default
Section 18	Social Relationships with Judicial Officers, Neutrals, and Court-Appointed Experts
Section 19	Privacy
Section 20	Negotiation of Written Agreements
Section 21	Additional Provision for Family Law Practitioners
Section 22	Additional Provision for Criminal Law Practitioners
Section 23	Diversity and Elimination of Bias
Section 24	Mentorship
Section 25	Role of Judicial Officers

Many of the Civility Guidelines address issues commonly encountered in civil litigation because those interactions frequently present questions of professional courtesy and civility. At the same time, the Civility Guidelines are intended for all California attorneys, regardless of practice area. Although every area of practice is not addressed specifically, the principles reflected throughout the Civility Guidelines are intended to inform professional conduct whenever attorneys interact with clients, colleagues, courts, and members of the public.

C. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

The Civility Guidelines include model materials that courts, bar associations, and other legal organizations may use to promote professionalism and civility.

Sample Resolution. A model resolution is included for voluntary bar associations, legal organizations, or other groups that wish to formally endorse and implement the Civility Guidelines.

Sample Court Order. A model court order is included for courts that wish to adopt or reference the Civility Guidelines through local rules, standing orders, or case management orders, as appropriate.

D. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Attorneys, courts, and legal organizations seeking further guidance on civility and professionalism may wish to consult resources beyond the Civility Guidelines themselves.

Civility Toolkit. The State Bar of California has published a Civility Toolkit containing instructor-led educational materials designed to support live delivery of civility-focused MCLE programming.

eLearning Course. The State Bar of California offers an on-demand course on civility and professionalism designed to satisfy the civility component of the MCLE requirement.

Local Bar Associations and Court Civility Guidelines. Courts and local bar associations throughout California have adopted civility guidelines, codes of professionalism, and related standards addressing local practice. Attorneys should consult applicable local rules and guidelines, which may address matters of practice or procedure not covered by these Civility Guidelines.

California Civility Task Force Report. The California Civility Task Force issued *Beyond the Oath: Recommendations for Improving Civility* in September 2021. The report provides additional background on California's civility initiatives and the recommendations that informed subsequent developments described in Part I.B.

PART III. CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GUIDELINES OF CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

INTRODUCTION

As officers of the court with responsibilities to the administration of justice, attorneys have an obligation to conduct themselves professionally in their interactions with clients, other parties and counsel, the courts, and the public. This obligation includes acting with civility, professional integrity, personal dignity, candor, diligence, respect, courtesy, and cooperation, all of which are essential to the fair administration of justice and effective dispute resolution.

The voluntary Civility Guidelines are offered to promote effective advocacy, enhance the practice of law, and contribute to efficient and economical client representation. The legal profession should strive for the highest standards of professionalism to strengthen public confidence in the legal system and enhance the administration of justice. Uncivil or unprofessional conduct not only disserves clients and those directly involved, but it also demeans the profession as a whole and our system of justice.

The Civility Guidelines promote aspirational standards of civility and professionalism that complement, and in many respects exceed, the minimum requirements established by the Rules of Professional Conduct. They are not intended to replace the Rules of Professional Conduct or any other rules or laws that govern attorney conduct, and they are not to be used as an independent basis for disciplinary charges by the State Bar or claims of professional negligence.

The Civility Guidelines are intended to complement professionalism and civility standards by courts, bar associations, law firms, and other legal organizations. The Guidelines are intended to apply to attorneys in every practice area. Attorneys are encouraged to follow both the spirit and letter of these Civility Guidelines, recognizing that professionalism and civility are fully consistent with the duty of zealous and effective client representation. The Civility Guidelines are intended to serve as a practical resource that attorneys may consult throughout their careers in exercising sound professional judgment.

These 2026 revisions preserve the structure and aspirational purpose of the first 2007 Civility Guidelines while modernizing the language, reflecting developments in legal practice and technology, and improving clarity and usability.

SECTION 1
RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

The dignity, decorum, and courtesy that have traditionally characterized the courts and legal profession are not empty formalities. They are essential to an atmosphere that promotes justice and to an attorney's responsibility for the fair and impartial administration of justice.

SECTION 2
RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PUBLIC AND THE PROFESSION

An attorney should be mindful that, as individual circumstances permit, the goals of the profession include improving the administration of justice and contributing time to persons and organizations that cannot afford legal assistance.

SECTION 3
RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CLIENT AND CLIENT REPRESENTATION

An attorney should treat clients with courtesy and respect and represent them in a civil and professional manner. An attorney should advise current and potential clients that it is not acceptable for an attorney to engage in abusive behavior or other conduct unbecoming a licensee of the State Bar and an officer of the court.

As an officer of the court, an attorney should not allow clients to prevail upon the attorney to engage in uncivil behavior.

An attorney should not compromise the guidelines of civility and professionalism to achieve an advantage.

SECTION 4
COMMUNICATIONS ABOUT THE LEGAL SYSTEM

An attorney's communications about the legal system should at all times reflect civility, professional integrity, personal dignity, and respect for the legal system. An attorney should not engage in conduct that is unbecoming a licensee of the State Bar and an officer of the court.

For example, in communications about the legal system:

a. An attorney's conduct should be consistent with high respect and esteem for the civil and criminal justice systems.

b. This guideline does not prohibit an attorney's good faith expression of dissent or criticism made in public or private discussions for the purpose of improving the legal system or profession.

c. An attorney should not disparage the intelligence, integrity, ethics, morals, or behavior of the court or other counsel, parties, or participants when those characteristics are not at issue.

d. Respecting cultural diversity, an attorney should not disparage another's personal characteristics.

e. An attorney should not make exaggerated, false, or misleading statements to the media or on social media while representing a party in a pending matter.

Nothing above shall be construed as discouraging the reporting of conduct that fails to comply with the Rules of Professional Conduct.

SECTION 5
COMMUNICATIONS TO AND REGARDING OTHER COUNSEL

An attorney's communications with other attorneys, including opposing counsel, should at all times be respectful, civil, and courteous, regardless of the method of communication. An attorney should also act in good faith in dealings with other counsel.

For example:

a. An attorney should not employ abusive, demeaning, or humiliating language in communications with or about other attorneys.

b. An attorney should adhere to all express promises and to agreements with other counsel, whether oral or in writing, and should adhere in good faith to all agreements implied by the circumstances or local customs.

c. When attorneys reach an oral understanding on a proposed agreement or a stipulation and decide to commit it to writing, the drafter should endeavor in good faith to state the oral understanding accurately and completely. The drafter should provide the other counsel with the opportunity to review the writing.

d. An attorney should not attribute to opposing counsel a position the attorney has not taken or create a false or misleading record of events. Communications intended only to create a record should be used sparingly and only when necessary, under the circumstances. Unless specifically permitted or invited by the court, communications between counsel should not be sent to the court.

e. An attorney should agree to reasonable requests in the interests of efficiency and economy, including agreeing to a waiver of procedural formalities, accepting electronic copies of documents, or informally resolving routine procedural matters, where appropriate.

SECTION 6
PUNCTUALITY

An attorney should be punctual in appearing at trials, hearings, meetings, depositions, and other scheduled appearances.

For example:

a. An attorney should arrive sufficiently in advance to resolve preliminary matters.

b. An attorney should timely notify participants when the attorney will be late or is aware that a participant will be late.

SECTION 7
USING TECHNOLOGY IN LEGAL MATTERS

An attorney should use technology in a manner that promotes effective communication and minimizes unnecessary disruption. In remote proceedings, an attorney should take reasonable steps to ensure that the attorneys and others appearing with the attorney are prepared to participate effectively and understand that the expectations of professional conduct and courtroom decorum apply in a remote setting.

For example:

a. An attorney should become familiar with the technology used for remote proceedings and take reasonable steps in advance to confirm that the attorney's equipment, internet connection, and other technology will support effective participation.

b. An attorney should participate in a remote proceeding from a location and through a connection that, to the extent reasonably possible, allows the attorney and those appearing with the attorney to participate without unnecessary distraction or disruption.

c. An attorney should establish an appropriate means of communicating with clients, other counsel, or self-represented parties during a remote proceeding when necessary to facilitate the proceeding or address technology issues.

d. An attorney who becomes aware that another participant is unable to participate effectively because of a technology issue should promptly alert the court or other appropriate participants and make reasonable efforts to avoid proceeding to that person's disadvantage.

e. An attorney should not communicate privately with a remote deposition witness while the witness is on the record through electronic or other means without disclosing the communication to the other participants and making it part of the record, as appropriate.

f. An attorney should not use technology, including artificial intelligence, in a manner inconsistent with these Civility Guidelines.

SECTION 8
SCHEDULING, CONTINUANCES AND EXTENSIONS OF TIME

An attorney should advise clients that civility and courtesy in scheduling meetings, hearings, and discovery are expected as professional conduct. Consistent with existing law and court

orders, attorneys should make reasonable efforts to accommodate scheduling conflicts of opposing counsel, witnesses, and the court when doing so will not prejudice their clients.

For example:

a. An attorney should consider the scheduling interests of the court, other counsel or parties, and other participants; schedule by agreement whenever possible; and send formal notice after agreement is reached.

b. An attorney should not arbitrarily or unreasonably withhold consent to a reasonable request for a scheduling accommodation.

c. An attorney should promptly notify the court and other counsel of problems with key participants' availability.

d. An attorney should promptly notify other counsel and, if appropriate, the court, when scheduled meetings, hearings, or depositions must be cancelled or rescheduled and provide alternate dates when possible.

e. An attorney should accommodate reasonable requests for remote or in-person appearances when permitted by the court and appropriate under the circumstances.

In considering requests for an extension of time, an attorney should consider the client's interests and need to promptly resolve matters, the schedules and willingness of others to grant reciprocal extensions, the time needed for a task, and other relevant factors.

For example:

a. Unless time is of the essence, an attorney should agree to an extension without requiring motions or other formalities, regardless of whether the requesting counsel previously refused to grant an extension.

b. An attorney should agree to an appropriate continuance when new counsel substitutes in.

c. An attorney should advise clients that failing to agree with reasonable requests for time extensions is inappropriate.

d. An attorney should not use extensions or continuances for harassment or to extend litigation.

e. An attorney should place conditions on an agreement to an extension only if they are fair and essential or if the attorney is entitled to impose them, for instance to preserve rights or seek reciprocal scheduling concessions.

f. If an attorney intends that a request for, or agreement to, an extension will limit a party's substantive rights or procedural options, the attorney should disclose that intent at the time of the request or agreement.

SECTION 9
SERVICE OF PAPERS

The timing and manner of service of papers should not be used to the disadvantage of the party receiving the papers.

For example:

a. An attorney should serve papers on the attorney who is responsible for the matter at the attorney's principal place of work.

b. If possible, papers should be served upon counsel at a time agreed upon in advance.

c. When serving papers, an attorney should allow sufficient time for opposing counsel to prepare for a court appearance or to respond to the papers.

d. An attorney should not time the service of papers to take advantage of an opponent's absence or to inconvenience the opponent, including by serving papers late at night, on weekends or holidays, or at other times a response may be unnecessarily burdensome. When possible, electronic service should be completed during normal business hours.

e. When it is likely that service by mail will prejudice an opposing party, an attorney should serve the papers by other permissible means.

f. When an attorney knows that a party or third party is represented by counsel and where there is uncertainty about whether counsel is authorized to accept service, the attorney should inquire whether counsel will accept service before serving the party or third party directly, when circumstances permit.

SECTION 10
WRITINGS SUBMITTED TO THE COURT, COUNSEL OR OTHER PARTIES

Written materials directed to counsel, third parties, or a court should be factual and concise and focused on the issue to be decided.

For example:

a. An attorney should not make ad hominem attacks on opposing counsel.

b. Unless at issue or relevant in a particular proceeding, an attorney should avoid degrading the intelligence, ethics, morals, integrity, or personal behavior of others.

c. An attorney should clearly identify all revisions in a document previously submitted to the court or other counsel.

SECTION 11
DISCOVERY

Attorneys are encouraged to meet and confer early in order to explore voluntary disclosure, which includes identification of issues, identification of persons with knowledge of such issues, and exchange of documents.

Attorneys are encouraged to propound and respond to formal discovery in a manner designed to fully implement the purposes of the Civil Discovery Act.

An attorney should not use discovery to harass an opposing counsel, parties, or witnesses. An attorney should not use discovery to delay the resolution of a dispute.

An attorney should conduct discovery to obtain necessary information efficiently while minimizing unnecessary burden or expense.

An attorney should cooperate in addressing issues related to electronically stored information, including reasonable search parameters and production formats, when appropriate.

For example:

a. As to Interrogatories:

    1. An attorney should narrowly tailor special interrogatories and not use them to harass or impose an undue burden or expense on an opposing party.

    2. An attorney should not intentionally misconstrue or respond to interrogatories in a manner that is not truly responsive.

    3. When an attorney lacks a good faith belief in the merit of an objection, the attorney should not object to an interrogatory. If an interrogatory is objectionable in part, an attorney should answer the unobjectionable part.

b. As to Document Demands:

    1. Document requests should be used only to seek those documents that are reasonably needed to prosecute or defend an action.

    2. An attorney should not make demands to harass or embarrass a party or witness or to impose an inordinate burden or expense in responding.

3. In responding to a document demand, an attorney should not intentionally misconstrue a request to avoid disclosure or withhold a document on the grounds of privilege without a good faith basis.

4. An attorney should not produce disorganized or unintelligible documents or produce documents in a way that hides or obscures the existence of particular documents.

5. An attorney should not delay in producing a document in order to prevent opposing counsel from inspecting the document prior to or during a scheduled deposition or for some other tactical reason.

c. As to Depositions:

1. When another party notices a deposition for the near future, absent unusual circumstances, an attorney should not schedule another deposition in the same case for an earlier date without opposing counsel's agreement.

2. An attorney should delay a scheduled deposition only when necessary to address scheduling problems and not in bad faith.

3. An attorney should treat other counsel and participants with courtesy and civility and should not engage in conduct that would be inappropriate in the presence of a judicial officer.

4. An attorney should remember that vigorous advocacy can be consistent with professional courtesy, and that arguments or conflicts with other counsel should not be personal.

5. An attorney questioning a deponent should provide other counsel present with a copy of any document shown to the deponent before or at the same time the document is shown to the deponent.

6. An attorney questioning a deponent should not bully or seek to intimidate the deponent.

7. Once a question is asked, an attorney should not interrupt a deposition or make an objection for the purpose of coaching a deponent or suggesting answers.

8. An attorney should not direct a deponent to refuse to answer a question or end the deposition without a legal basis for doing so.

9. An attorney should refrain from self-serving speeches and speaking objections.

SECTION 12
MOTION PRACTICE

An attorney should consider whether, before filing or pursuing a motion, to contact opposing counsel to attempt to informally resolve or limit the dispute.

For example:

a. Before filing demurrers, motions to strike, motions to transfer venue, and motions for judgment on the pleadings, an attorney should engage in more than a pro forma effort to resolve the issue. An attorney should begin the meet and confer process early enough to allow it to be completed before the deadline to file the motion.

b. In complying with any meet and confer requirement in the California Code of Civil Procedure, an attorney should speak personally with opposing counsel and engage in a good faith effort to resolve or informally limit an issue.

c. An attorney should not engage in conduct that forces opposing counsel to file a motion and then not oppose the motion.

d. An attorney who has no reasonable objection to a proposed motion should promptly make this position known to opposing counsel, who then may file an unopposed motion or avoid filing a motion.

e. After opposing a motion, if an attorney recognizes that the movant's position is correct, the attorney should promptly advise the movant and the court of this change in position.

f. Because requests for monetary sanctions, even if statutorily authorized, can adversely affect a productive relationship between counsel or parties, monetary sanctions should not be sought unless fully justified by the circumstances and necessary to protect a client's legitimate interests and then only after a good faith effort to resolve the issue informally among counsel.

SECTION 13
DEALING WITH NONPARTY WITNESSES

It is important to promote high regard for the profession and the legal system among those who are neither attorneys nor litigants. An attorney's conduct in dealings with nonparty witnesses should exhibit the highest standards of civility.

For example:

a. An attorney should be courteous and respectful in communications with nonparty witnesses.

b. Upon request, an attorney should extend professional courtesies and grant reasonable accommodations, unless to do so would materially prejudice the client's lawful objectives.

c. An attorney should take special care to protect a witness from undue harassment or embarrassment and to state questions in a form that is appropriate to the witness's age and development.

d. An attorney should not issue a subpoena to a nonparty witness for inappropriate tactical or strategic purposes, such as to intimidate or harass the nonparty.

e. When there has been uncertainty about whether a previously scheduled deposition will proceed, an attorney should notify all counsel once the attorney knows whether the deposition will go forward as scheduled.

f. An attorney who obtains a document pursuant to a deposition subpoena should, upon request, make copies of the document available to all other counsel at their expense.

SECTION 14
EX PARTE COMMUNICATION WITH THE COURT

In a social setting or otherwise, an attorney should not communicate ex parte with a judicial officer on the substance of a case pending before the court, unless permitted by law.

SECTION 15
SETTLEMENT AND ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION

An attorney should raise and explore with the client and, if the client consents, with opposing counsel, the possibility of settlement and alternative dispute resolution in every matter as soon as possible and, when appropriate, during the course of litigation.

For example:

a. An attorney should advise a client at the outset of the relationship of the availability of informal or alternative dispute resolution.

b. An attorney should attempt to evaluate a matter objectively and to de-escalate any controversy or dispute in an effort to resolve or limit the controversy or dispute.

c. An attorney should consider whether alternative dispute resolution would adequately serve a client's interest and dispose of the controversy expeditiously and economically.

d. An attorney should honor a client's desire to settle the dispute quickly and in a cost-effective manner.

e. An attorney should use an alternative dispute resolution process for purposes of settlement and not for delay or other improper purposes, such as discovery.

f. An attorney should participate in good faith and assist the alternative dispute officer by providing pertinent and accurate facts, law, theories, opinions and arguments in an attempt to resolve a dispute.

g. An attorney should not falsely hold out the possibility of settlement as a means for terminating discovery or delaying trial.

h. An attorney should timely provide required briefing and other materials to the settlement officer to allow adequate time to prepare for the settlement conference.

SECTION 16
CONDUCT IN COURT

To promote a positive image of the profession, an attorney should always act respectfully and with dignity in court and assist the court in proper handling of a case.

For example:

a. An attorney should be punctual and prepared.

b. An attorney's conduct should avoid disorder or disruption and preserve the right to a fair trial.

c. An attorney should maintain respect for and confidence in a judicial office by displaying courtesy, dignity, and respect toward the court and courtroom personnel.

d. An attorney should refrain from conduct that inappropriately demeans another person.

e. Before appearing in court, an attorney should advise a client of the kind of behavior expected of the client and endeavor to prevent the client from creating disorder or disruption in the courtroom.

f. An attorney should make objections for legitimate and good faith reasons, and not for the purpose of harassment or delay.

g. An attorney should honor an opposing counsel's requests that do not materially prejudice the rights of the attorney's client or sacrifice tactical advantage.

h. While appearing before the court, an attorney should address all arguments, objections, and requests to the court, rather than directly to opposing counsel.

i. While appearing in court, an attorney should demonstrate sensitivity to any party, witness, or attorney who has requested or may need a reasonable accommodation to facilitate full and fair access to the court.

SECTION 17
DEFAULT

An attorney should not take the default of an opposing party known to be represented by counsel without giving the party advance warning.

For example, an attorney should not race opposing counsel to the courthouse to knowingly enter a default before a responsive pleading can be filed. This guideline is intended to apply only to taking a default when there is a failure to timely respond to complaints, cross-complaints, and amended pleadings.

SECTION 18
SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH JUDICIAL OFFICERS, NEUTRALS, AND COURT-APPOINTED EXPERTS

An attorney should avoid even the appearance of bias by notifying opposing counsel or an unrepresented opposing party of any close, personal relationship between the attorney and a judicial officer, arbitrator, mediator, or court-appointed expert and allowing a reasonable opportunity to object.

SECTION 19
PRIVACY

An attorney should respect the privacy rights of parties and nonparties.

For example:

a. An attorney should not inquire into, attempt, or threaten to use private facts concerning any party or other individuals for the purpose of gaining an advantage in a case. This guideline does not preclude inquiry into sensitive matters relevant to an issue, as long as the inquiry is pursued as narrowly as possible.

b. If an attorney must inquire into an individual's private affairs, the attorney should cooperate in arranging for protective measures, including stipulating to an appropriate protective order, designed to ensure that the information revealed is disclosed only for purposes relevant to the pending litigation.

c. Nothing herein shall be construed as authorizing the withholding of information in violation of applicable law.

SECTION 20
NEGOTIATION OF WRITTEN AGREEMENTS

An attorney should negotiate and conclude written agreements in a cooperative manner and with informed authority of the client.

For example:

a. An attorney should use boilerplate provisions only if they apply to the subject of the agreement.

b. If an attorney modifies a document, the attorney should clearly identify the change and bring it to the attention of other counsel.

c. An attorney should avoid negotiating tactics that are abusive, are not made in good faith, threaten inappropriate legal action, are not true, set arbitrary deadlines, are intended solely to gain an unfair advantage or take unfair advantage of a superior bargaining position, or do not accurately reflect the client's wishes or previous oral agreements.

d. An attorney should not participate in an action or the preparation of a document that is intended to circumvent or violate applicable laws or rules.

e. An attorney should adhere to all express promises and to agreements with other counsel, whether oral or in writing, and should adhere in good faith to all agreements implied by the circumstances or local customs.

In addition to other applicable sections of these Guidelines, attorneys engaged in a transactional practice have unique responsibilities because much of the practice is conducted without judicial supervision.

For example:

a. Attorneys should be mindful that their primary goals are to negotiate in a manner that accurately represents their client and the purpose for which they were retained.

b. Attorneys should work to timely conclude a transaction in a manner that accurately represents the parties' intentions and minimizes the potential for litigation.

c. With client approval, attorneys should consider giving each party permission to contact the employees of the other party for the purpose of promptly and efficiently obtaining necessary information and documents.

SECTION 21
ADDITIONAL PROVISION FOR FAMILY LAW PRACTITIONERS

In addition to other applicable sections of these Guidelines, in family law proceedings an attorney should seek to reduce emotional tension and trauma and encourage the parties and attorneys to interact in a cooperative atmosphere and keep the best interests of the children in mind.

For example:

a. An attorney should discourage and should not abet vindictive conduct.

b. An attorney should treat all participants with courtesy and respect in order to minimize the emotional intensity of a family dispute.

c. An attorney representing a parent should consider the welfare of a minor child and seek to minimize the adverse impact of the family law proceeding on the child.

SECTION 22
ADDITIONAL PROVISION FOR CRIMINAL LAW PRACTITIONERS

In addition to other applicable sections of these Guidelines, criminal law practitioners have unique responsibilities. Prosecutors are charged with seeking justice, while defenders must zealously represent their clients even in the face of seemingly overwhelming evidence of guilt. In practicing criminal law, an attorney should appreciate these roles.

For example:

a. A prosecutor should not question the propriety of defending a person accused of a crime.

b. Appellate counsel and trial counsel should communicate openly, civilly, and without rancor, endeavoring to keep the proceedings on a professional level.

SECTION 23
DIVERSITY AND ELIMINATION OF BIAS

Professional courtesy and civility include treating all participants in the legal system with respect and dignity, without bias or discrimination. An attorney should promote professionalism in interactions with opposing counsel, clients, witnesses, judicial officers, and members of the public. An attorney should not engage in bias-based or discriminatory conduct based on age, race, national origin, ethnicity, political views, cultural or economic background, religion, disability, gender identity, or sexual orientation in the practice of law and should support efforts to eliminate bias in the justice system.

For example:

a. An attorney should treat other attorneys with respect and courtesy without regard to those characteristics.

b. An attorney should not attempt to intimidate or take advantage of another attorney based on those characteristics.

c. An attorney should not tolerate bias or prejudice in professional interactions and should take appropriate steps to address such conduct when it occurs.

d. An attorney should refrain from public or private statements that demean another attorney, judicial officer, or member of the public based on those characteristics.

SECTION 24
MENTORSHIP

An attorney should promote professionalism within the legal profession by mentoring newer members of the State Bar and modeling respectful conduct in professional interactions.

Attorneys in managerial, supervisory, or leadership roles should encourage practices that support professionalism, civility, mentorship, and attorney well-being.

Providing less experienced attorneys with meaningful opportunities for professional development can support their growth and promote professionalism within the legal community. Where appropriate, experienced attorneys should:

a. Mentor less experienced attorneys and provide constructive feedback without undue or harsh criticism.

b. Provide less experienced attorneys opportunities to attend and present oral arguments at hearings.

c. Provide less experienced attorneys opportunities to take and defend depositions.

d. Provide less experienced attorneys opportunities to make meaningful contributions at trial.

SECTION 25
ROLE OF JUDICIAL OFFICERS

Judges are encouraged to become familiar with these Guidelines and to support and promote them where appropriate in court proceedings.

PART IV. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism?

The California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism (**"Civility Guidelines"**) are a set of aspirational best practices that encourage attorneys to conduct themselves with professionalism, courtesy, and respect while fulfilling their obligations to clients, the courts, opposing counsel, and the public. The Civility Guidelines are intended to promote civility in the practice of law and support the fair and efficient administration of justice.

2. Why were the Civility Guidelines revised?

The original Civility Guidelines were adopted in 2007. Since that time, the practice of law has evolved significantly, including changes in technology, attorney communications, remote practice, and developments in California case law addressing civility and professionalism. The revisions modernize the Civility Guidelines to reflect contemporary legal practice while preserving their original purpose and aspirational nature.

3. What are the most significant changes in the revised Civility Guidelines?

The revised Civility Guidelines preserve the structure, purpose, and aspirational nature of the 2007 Civility Guidelines while updating them to reflect developments in the practice of law and the legal profession.

Among the most significant changes are:

- Modernized language and terminology throughout the Civility Guidelines.
- New and revised guidance addressing technology, electronic communications, and other developments in modern legal practice.
- Additional examples and commentary reflecting contemporary professionalism issues.
- Revisions informed by developments in California case law concerning civility and professionalism.
- Updates to improve organization, clarity, consistency, and readability.
- Revisions to better reflect current expectations regarding professionalism, inclusion, and respectful conduct within the legal profession.

Although many sections have been updated, the revisions are intended to preserve the fundamental principles of professionalism and civility reflected in the original Civility

Guidelines rather than create new disciplinary standards or attorney obligations under the California Rules of Professional Conduct.

4. How were the revised Civility Guidelines developed?

State Bar staff developed the proposed revisions after reviewing the 2007 Civility Guidelines, California appellate decisions, recommendations of the California Civility Task Force, civility guidelines adopted by California courts and local bar associations, and other resources addressing attorney professionalism. Staff prepared draft revisions and received feedback from the Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct Civility Working Group and other stakeholders, including members of the California Civility Task Force, before finalizing the proposed revisions.

5. Are the Civility Guidelines mandatory?

No. The Civility Guidelines are aspirational and are intended to encourage best practices in the legal profession. They are written using the term "should" rather than "must," consistent with the California Supreme Court's drafting conventions for nonmandatory guidance.

6. Do the Civility Guidelines create new ethical duties or standards of care?

No. The Civility Guidelines do not create new ethical obligations, standards of care, or independent grounds for attorney discipline or civil liability. They are intended to complement—not replace—the California Rules of Professional Conduct, the State Bar Act, applicable statutes, and rules of court.

7. How are the Civility Guidelines different from the California Rules of Professional Conduct?

The California Rules of Professional Conduct establish the minimum standards governing attorney conduct and may serve as the basis for professional discipline.

The Civility Guidelines are educational and aspirational. They encourage attorneys to exercise sound professional judgment and promote professionalism beyond the minimum standards required by the disciplinary rules.

8. If the Civility Guidelines are voluntary, why should attorneys follow them?

Professionalism and civility benefit clients, attorneys, courts, and the legal system. Civil and professional conduct promotes more effective advocacy, reduces unnecessary conflict and expense, improves working relationships, and enhances public confidence in the administration of justice. Recent California decisions have also recognized that uncivil conduct may, in appropriate circumstances, affect attorney fee awards or other judicial determinations. (See Part I.D., Legal Status and Relationship to Other Authorities.)

9. Do the Civility Guidelines apply to all California attorneys?

Yes. The Civility Guidelines are intended for attorneys in every practice setting and area of law. Although some sections address issues most commonly encountered in civil litigation, the principles reflected throughout the Civility Guidelines are broadly applicable whenever attorneys interact with clients, opposing counsel, courts, or members of the public.

10. May courts, law firms, or bar associations adopt the Civility Guidelines?

Yes. Courts, law firms, local bar associations, and other legal organizations may adopt or endorse the Civility Guidelines in whole or in part, or incorporate them into professionalism initiatives, educational programs, or other efforts designed to encourage civility within their organizations.

Sample implementation materials are included with the Civility Guidelines.

11. How do the Civility Guidelines relate to existing local civility guidelines?

The Civility Guidelines are intended to complement, not replace, existing civility guidelines adopted by California courts, local bar associations, or other legal organizations. Organizations may continue using their own professionalism standards or adapt these Civility Guidelines to meet local needs.

12. Do the Civility Guidelines diminish an attorney's duty of zealous advocacy?

No. Civility and effective advocacy are complementary rather than competing principles. Attorneys remain obligated to represent their clients diligently and competently while also fulfilling their professional responsibilities to the courts, opposing counsel, the legal profession, and the administration of justice. The Civility Guidelines encourage attorneys to pursue their clients' objectives with professionalism, integrity, and respect.

13. Where can I find additional resources on civility and professionalism?

Additional educational resources are available through the State Bar of California, including the Civility Toolkit and the eLearning course described in Part II.D., Additional Resources. Courts, local bar associations, and legal organizations may also develop supplemental materials or programs to encourage professionalism within their communities.

PART V. SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIALS

A. SAMPLE RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION OF [_____]
APPROVING AND ADOPTING CALIFORNIA ATTORNEY GUIDELINES OF CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM

RECITALS

A. As officers of the court, attorneys have a responsibility to promote the fair administration of justice, by conducting themselves with professionalism in their interactions with clients, other parties and counsel, the courts, and the public. This obligation includes civility, integrity, personal dignity, candor, diligence, respect, courtesy, and cooperation, all of which contribute to the fair administration of justice and effective resolution of disputes.

B. The legal profession continues to face challenges that affect professionalism and civility. The Civility Guidelines encourage attorneys to reaffirm their commitment to these principles and to promote respectful, effective advocacy.

C. The California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism (the "Civility Guidelines") were originally adopted by the State Bar of California in 2007 and were subsequently revised in 2026 to reflect developments in the practice of law, technology, attorney professionalism, and civility.

D. In 2014, the California Supreme Court adopted what is now rule 9.7 of the California Rules of Court, requiring newly admitted attorneys to affirm that they will conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and integrity. In 2025, the California Supreme Court approved amendments requiring all California attorneys to make an annual declaration of adherence to that commitment, reinforcing the profession's continuing commitment to civility and professionalism.

E. The Board of Directors of [_____] believes that the Civility Guidelines promote professionalism, strengthen public confidence in the legal profession, and provide valuable guidance for attorneys practicing in California.

RESOLUTION

Now, therefore, be it Resolved that the Board of Directors of [_____] approves and endorses the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism and

encourages its members to incorporate the principles reflected in the Civility Guidelines into their professional practice.

Dated: _____

[_____]

By: _____

B. SAMPLE COURT ORDER

1. The Court expects counsel to be familiar with and adhere to the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism (the "Civility Guidelines").

2. A copy of the Civility Guidelines may be obtained at the following URL:

   https://www.calbar.ca.gov/sites/default/files/media/8c/8c00983b-fed7-41a6-a521-faff9787f6dd.pdf

3. The Court expects all participants in proceedings before it to conduct themselves with civility, professionalism, and respect.

4. The Court expects counsel to make reasonable efforts to resolve scheduling matters, requests for continuances, and extensions of time without unnecessary court involvement.

5. Nothing in this Order alters the California Rules of Professional Conduct, applicable statutes, or local rules. Rather, the Civility Guidelines are intended to supplement those authorities by encouraging professionalism and civility in the practice of law.

The State Bar of California

Civility in Practice: Navigating Professional Responsibilities

Toolkit Instructions

February 2026

TOOLKIT INSTRUCTIONS

This toolkit provides materials to deliver a one-hour educational program on civility and professional responsibility. It is designed to promote discussion, reflection, and practical judgment rather than scripted lecture delivery. The toolkit supports joint presentations by judges and attorneys, reflecting shared responsibility for promoting civility and professionalism within the legal system. Judicial participation is optional and educational in nature.

The toolkit establishes a baseline statewide civility program that may be adapted for different audiences, practice settings, and levels of subject matter expertise. It is intentionally comprehensive so that faculty with varying experience levels have access to sufficient background, examples, and resources to support effective instruction. Not all materials are intended to be used in a single presentation.

The toolkit includes a lesson plan, a PowerPoint presentation, and supporting handouts for participants. These materials may be used for live or remote delivery and may be adapted consistent with the guidance provided below.

PURPOSE OF THE TOOLKIT

This toolkit is intended to help faculty introduce core concepts, facilitate discussion, and guide participants in applying the material to their professional work. The approach emphasizes professional judgment and practical decision-making, focusing on preventative education rather than rule recitation or evaluation of individual conduct.

This program does not create new standards of conduct, establish disciplinary rules, or assess attorney behavior. It is designed to reinforce existing professional obligations and support a shared culture of civility within the legal profession.

FACULTY TEACHING NOTES

Civility is best learned through reflection, shared experience, and judgment calls, rather than exhaustive review of rules or authorities. Many participants will arrive with substantial experience and strong views. Faculty should use that experience as a teaching asset and focus discussion on how civility expectations intersect with advocacy, client management, and interactions with the court.

Faculty should avoid adjudicating conduct or framing hypotheticals in terms of disciplinary outcomes. The focus should remain on reasoning, professional judgment, and risk awareness. Where questions require individualized guidance, faculty should direct participants to appropriate resources, including the State Bar Ethics Hotline. The Hotline provides research assistance and does not offer legal advice.

This program may be presented by an attorney alone or jointly with a judicial officer. Where judicial officers participate, faculty notes identify opportunities for institutional perspective and

courtroom insight, but judicial participants are not limited to those prompts and may contribute as appropriate. Judicial participation is educational and does not involve discussion of discipline or sanctions.

Encourage participants to think about how the course content applies to their specific work settings, including interactions with opposing counsel, clients, the court, and in non-litigation or advisory roles. Where appropriate, invite participants to share examples or perspectives that reflect differing roles within the legal system.

SLIDE DESIGN AND USE

Core Instructional Model (One-Hour Program)

For a standard one-hour session, faculty are encouraged to use core instructional components rather than comprehensive slide coverage. These components are designed to anchor discussion, polling, and scenario-based learning rather than to deliver all substantive content.

Faculty should not attempt to advance through every slide in the deck during a one-hour program. Pacing should prioritize engagement, discussion, and application over slide coverage. Recommended timing assumes coverage of core instructional components only and does not include optional or expanded slides.

Optional and Expanded Slides

Additional slides are included to support flexibility for longer programs or deeper discussion and are addressed in more detail below.

Graphics and Customization

The PowerPoint uses the State Bar's standard slide template to promote consistency, accessibility, and accuracy across statewide programs. Faculty are encouraged to add visuals, graphics, or interactive elements consistent with their teaching style and audience needs. Because this program has been approved by the State Bar for one hour of civility MCLE credit, any modifications should be limited to presentation style, examples, and discussion format, and should not alter the core instructional content or learning objectives. The Civility Toolkit is designed to support a one-hour core civility program and may also support longer sessions through the inclusion of optional slides, additional hypotheticals, and extended discussion. MCLE credit approval is based on the program as delivered, and providers seeking credit for sessions longer than one hour must ensure the presentation meets applicable MCLE requirements and obtain approval for the full instructional time.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- Analyze the purpose and scope of the Civility Oath under California Rules of Court, rule 9.7, and assess how it fits within the broader framework of professional responsibility.
- Apply the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism to common practice scenarios involving opposing counsel, the court, and clients.
- Identify and address bias-linked incivility, including microaggressions, using practical strategies that promote fairness and inclusion.
- Make informed judgment calls that reinforce a culture of civility within legal practice settings, courtrooms, and professional communities.

COURSE COMPONENTS

- Lesson Plan (timing, content flow, and faculty notes)
- PowerPoint Presentation (aligned with lesson plan)
- Handouts (resources, articles, and references)
- Polling questions or discussion prompts (included in the Lesson Plan, PowerPoint, and below)

Scenarios are included both in the PowerPoint and in the instruction materials. Slides are intended to support live facilitation, while handouts provide fuller context, debrief guidance, and materials for reflection and follow-up.

DELIVERY GUIDANCE

- Present the material using the lesson plan as the primary guide, adapting pacing as needed to support discussion.
- Use polling questions or discussion prompts to support engagement and reflection.
- Encourage participants to consider the reasoning process behind decisions, not just outcomes.
- Conclude with key takeaways that reinforce professional judgment and direct participants to additional resources where appropriate.
- This toolkit is designed to be adapted for different practice settings while preserving the educational framing, timing, and core learning objectives.

STATE BAR RESOURCES

Faculty are encouraged to highlight State Bar resources during the program, including:

- Ethics Hotline at 800-238-4427
- Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) at 877-527-4435

Many attorneys are unaware of these resources. Including them as part of civility education supports early intervention, professionalism, and preventative practice support.

RECOMMENDED CORE SLIDES FOR A ONE-HOUR PROGRAM

For a standard one-hour, discussion-based session, the PowerPoint is organized around a core instructional framework rather than a fixed slide count. The program is designed to support core teaching moments, anchored by framing slides, interactive hypotheticals, and guided debrief.

Core Instructional Components

For a one-hour program, faculty are encouraged to include the following core components:

- Title Slide and course overview (Slides 1-2)
- Civility in California: Key Milestones (Slide 3)
- The Civility Oath and Annual Declaration (Slides 5-6)
- MCLE civility requirement (Slide 7)
- How is “civility” measured or defined (Slides 10)
- Introduction to Civility Guidelines (Slides 11-12)
- Scenario-based discussion of courtroom advocacy (Slides 13-14)
- Bias-linked incivility in practice (Slides 17-18, 21)
- Scenario-based discussion of written communications (Slides 22-23)
- Scenario-based discussion of client pressure (Slides 27-28)
- Practical consequences of incivility (Slides 29-30)
- State Bar resources and support (Slides 33-34)
- Reflection on fostering a culture of civility (Slide 35)
- Instructions to receive MCLE credit (Slide 36)

These components may be supported by multiple slides and should be treated as instructional anchors, not a requirement to advance through a specific number of slides.

Optional and Expanded Slides

The PowerPoint deck includes additional slides that provide expanded doctrinal context, extended examples, constitutional considerations, or reference material. To support pacing for a one-hour program, these slides are hidden in the default slide view and identified as optional in the lesson plan and faculty notes.

Slides are intentionally not labeled as “optional” within the slide content itself. Faculty should rely on the lesson plan and faculty notes to determine which slides are core and which may be unhidden and used for longer sessions, specialized audiences, or deeper discussion.

Hidden slides remain part of the official toolkit and may be unhidden and incorporated without modification based on audience needs, time available, and teaching style.

Final Note for Faculty

The full slide deck and handouts are provided to support flexibility and confidence in teaching. Faculty are encouraged to adapt content, add visuals, and adjust pacing to meet audience needs while preserving the core learning objectives and educational framing of the program.

POLLING AND DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Polling questions and discussion prompts are included to support engagement, reflection, and application of the material. Faculty may choose to use polls, open discussion, breakout groups, or other interactive methods depending on audience size, delivery format, and time available.

For a one-hour session, faculty are encouraged to select one to three polling questions or scenarios aligned with the core teaching slides. Faculty should not feel obligated to use every poll or hypothetical included in the materials.

Polling questions are designed to surface reasoning and professional judgment rather than to test knowledge. Where a preferred response is identified, it is provided as facilitation guidance rather than a graded or definitive answer.

Polling setup guidance

- Load each poll as a separate question
- Title each poll using the slide number and hypothetical title
- Allow time for discussion before revealing any suggested response
- Use poll results as a starting point for discussion rather than an endpoint

Faculty may adapt, modify, or replace polling questions to better suit their audience and teaching style while preserving the core learning objectives. If you need assistance adding the poll, please visit **Conducting Polls in Zoom Meetings** or visit **Conducting Polls in Teams**.

For a standard one-hour program, polling works best when paired with the following core scenarios:

- Your Role in Courtroom Advocacy
- Your Role with Your Client

Use of suggested responses

Suggested responses are included to support faculty facilitation. Faculty should avoid framing responses as right or wrong and should instead focus discussion on:

- Risks and consequences associated with different choices
- Professional judgment and reasoning
- Impact on clients, courts, and opposing counsel

The following hypotheticals are provided as facilitation tools. Faculty may select, adapt, or omit scenarios based on time, audience, and instructional goals.

1. HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN COURTROOM ADVOCACY

Note: This hypothetical may be used as a poll or facilitated discussion.

Slide 13

A lawyer repeatedly interrupts opposing counsel during a hearing, raises their voice, and makes personal remarks about counsel's experience level.

Polling or Discussion Prompt

Which of the following is the best response under the Civility Guidelines?
A. Ignore the conduct and return to the argument.
B. Raise the concern respectfully with the court and request to proceed without interruption.
C. Match the tone to avoid looking weak in front of the client.
D. File a motion for sanctions immediately.

Option B reflects the approach most consistent with maintaining credibility with the court, protecting fairness in proceedings, and advancing the client's interests without escalating conflict.

DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL YOUR ROLE IN COURTROOM ADVOCACY

Slide 14

Before identifying the preferred response, ask audience to consider:
"What risks do you see in each option?"

Your role in courtroom advocacy includes maintaining credibility with the court, ensuring fairness in proceedings, and advancing your client's interests without undermining the tribunal. Point out the relevant sections of the Civility Guidelines, including: 1, 3, 4, and 10.

2. HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN PROTECTING THE TRIBUNAL

Note: This scenario is best used for discussion rather than polling and may be omitted in shorter sessions.

Slide 15

A plaintiff's attorney informed a defense attorney that he planned to arrive at the courthouse one hour prior to the hearing in hopes of addressing preliminary matters and discussing possible settlement, prior to the hearing. The defense attorney responded with eagerness to discuss such matters and stated she would also appear one hour early. However, plaintiff's counsel encounters a problem and realizes that he cannot arrive early and will likely be at least

30 minutes late to court. Despite ample opportunity to do so, he fails to notify either the court or opposing counsel that he expects to be late. *Once plaintiff's counsel realized he would be late, what steps should he have taken to comply with his professional obligations and avoid prejudicing opposing counsel or the court?*

DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL YOUR ROLE IN PROTECTING THE TRIBUNAL

Slide 16

Seemingly minor process failures, such as failing to notify the court of a delay, can have outsized impacts on credibility, client cost, and court efficiency.

Civility Guidelines, Section 5: Attorneys should be punctual and should timely notify the court and other participants if they will be late.

In this scenario, counsel failed to notify the court and opposing counsel of a delay after proposing to arrive early, depriving the court of the opportunity to manage its docket and undermining trust between counsel. This scenario highlights how basic communication duties support fairness, efficiency, and the orderly administration of justice.

3. HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Note: This scenario is best used for discussion rather than polling and may be omitted in shorter sessions.

Slide 22

During a heated discovery meet and confer, opposing counsel sends an email accusing your client of "stalling on purpose" and calling your position "ridiculous." The lawyer copies the judge's clerk on the email.

Shortly afterward, opposing counsel leaves you an angry voicemail stating that this behavior is "typical" of your client and *references your client's background or culture* as an explanation for the conduct. Your client wants you to "match the tone," threaten sanctions, and copy the court in response.

Reflection Questions:
1. What professional obligations are implicated by the tone and content of opposing counsel's communications?
2. How does the reference to your client's background or culture change the analysis, if at all?
3. How would you explain your response strategy to your client?
4. What, if any, step should you take regarding the clerk being copied?

DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL YOUR ROLE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION

Slide 23

Your role in written communications is to model professionalism, manage tone under pressure, and protect your client's interests without escalating conflict or creating avoidable risk. The

Civility Guidelines discourage personal attacks, inflammatory language, and unnecessary copying of the court.

References to a party's background or culture shift a dispute from conduct to identity and can reflect bias-linked incivility, even when framed as frustration. A professional response resets the tone, avoids mirroring incivility, and keeps communications focused on the merits. This includes explaining to the client how escalation can increase cost, risk, and credibility concerns, and why restraint better serves the client's interests.

4. HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR CLIENT

Note: This hypothetical may be used as a poll or facilitated discussion.

Slide 27

Your client is frustrated with opposing counsel and insists that you "get aggressive." The client wants you to send a hostile email, threaten sanctions, and copy the court to "send a message." The client argues that this approach will show strength and speed things up.
You believe this approach will escalate the dispute, increase costs, and damage credibility with the court.

Polling or Discussion Prompt
Which response best reflects your role as the attorney?
A. Follow the client's direction to maintain trust and show zealous advocacy
B. Decline representation unless the client changes course
C. Explain your professional role, reset expectations, and propose an alternative strategy
D. Send the communication but soften the tone

Option C reflects the exercise of independent professional judgment and effective client management consistent with the Civility Guidelines.

DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR CLIENT

Slide 28

Client pressure is a common source of incivility. An attorney's role is to exercise independent professional judgment and set boundaries around how advocacy is carried out. Civility does not mean abandoning the client's goals. It means choosing strategies that advance those goals without creating unnecessary risk, cost, or delay.
Attorneys are responsible for professional conduct and strategy, even when clients push for aggressive or counterproductive behavior.

Discussion Prompts (Choose One or Two)

- How would you explain this boundary to the client without sounding dismissive?
- What risks does the client's proposed approach create for the case?
- How can you reframe civility as protecting the client's interests?

When client pressure escalates, your role is to lead and guide, not mirror. This scenario emphasizes managing client expectations, exercising professional judgment, and reframing civility as a tool for effective advocacy rather than a concession.

Lesson Plan—Civility in Practice: Navigating Professional Responsibilities

Course Designer(s): The State Bar of California, Office of Professional Competence.
Target Audience: California licensed attorneys.
No. of Participants: This program is designed for facilitated discussion and is most effective with approximately 20 to 40 participants. Smaller or larger groups may require additional facilitation strategies or adjustments to discussion format.
Length of Course: This course is designed as a modular program and may be delivered in 60, 90, or 120 minutes, depending on the inclusion of optional content and discussion components.
Course Description: This course covers the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism (the "Civility Guidelines") and related parts of the California Rules of Professional Conduct and the State Bar Act. The core curriculum satisfies the requirements for 1 hour of Minimum Continuing Legal Education credit in civility training. When optional slides, scenarios, and facilitated discussion are included, the course may be approved for up to 1.5 or 2 hours of MCLE credit.
Instructor Note: This lesson plan is organized around core teaching moments rather than comprehensive slide coverage. The recommended timing reflects a one-hour, discussion-based program. Faculty should use this plan as a guide and are encouraged to adapt pacing, select scenarios, and prioritize engagement over advancing through every slide. It is acceptable and expected to prioritize discussion over slide coverage.

Equipment Needed: Laptop and ability to poll users.
Prerequisites (if any): N/A.
Pre-course assignments (if any): Review the Civility Guidelines.
Fairness/ADA Issues to cover: Discuss the link between incivility and bias.

Learning Objectives (LO)

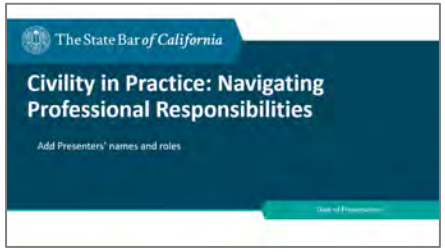
1. Analyze the purpose and scope of the Civility Oath under California Rules of Court, rule 9.7, and assess how it fits within the broader framework of professional responsibility.

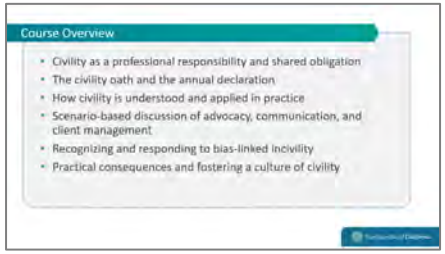
2. Apply the California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism to common practice scenarios involving opposing counsel, the court, and clients.

3. Identify and address bias-linked incivility, including microaggressions, using practical strategies that promote fairness and inclusion.

4. Make informed judgment calls that reinforce a culture of civility within legal practice settings, courtrooms, and professional communities.

Instructor Guidance on Scope and Pacing: This lesson plan includes more material than can be covered in a one-hour session. The recommended timing reflects coverage of the core instructional components only. Faculty should prioritize the core teaching blocks identified below and select no more than two to three scenarios for discussion. Optional slides are hidden in the default slide view and identified as optional in the lesson plan and faculty notes. Slides are not labeled as optional within the slide content itself. Optional slides are excluded from time estimates.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	BLOCK 1: Welcome, Framing, and Learning Approach (Approximate Time 5 minutes)		
Slide 1 	**WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS** **Civility in Practice: Navigating Professional Responsibilities** Add Presenters' names and roles Date of Presentation	Lecture	Faculty should introduce themselves and welcome participants. Set the expectation for facilitated discussion. Explain that this course qualifies for one-hour MCLE credit in civility and handle any housekeeping issues. This course is designed to be interactive. Many of the participants bring substantial experience, and the goal today is to reflect on how civility shows in your various roles in the profession. If presenting jointly, briefly acknowledge the value of hearing perspectives across roles. Judicial participation is intended to provide insight into courtroom operations and expectations, not to discuss sanctions or discipline.

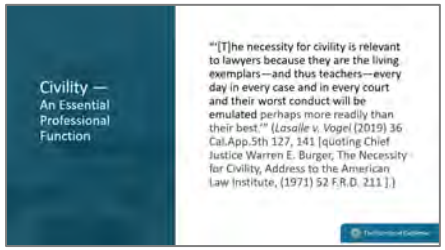
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 2 	**OVERVIEW** Civility as a professional responsibility and shared obligation The Civility Oath and the annual declaration How civility is understood and applied in practice Scenario-based discussion of advocacy, communication, and client management Recognizing and responding to bias-linked incivility Practical consequences and fostering a culture of civility	Lecture	Briefly walk through the topics to be covered. Emphasize that the course will move from background to application. Throughout this course, we will treat civility as a professional skill that shows up across the full lifecycle of legal practice, including courtroom advocacy, written communications, client management, interactions with opposing counsel, and the long-term reputation attorneys build with courts and colleagues.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	BLOCK 2: Civility in California and the Professional Responsibility Framework (Approximate Time 9 minutes)		
Slide 3 	**CIVILITY IN CALIFORNIA: KEY MILESTONES** 2007 Civility Guidelines adopted 2014 Civility added to oath 2021 Civility Task Force Report 2025 Civility MCLE requirement 2025 Civility Annual Civility Declaration	Lecture	Use this timeline to show how California's approach to civility has evolved over time, with an increasing emphasis on education, shared professional norms, and culture rather than new disciplinary rules. Key developments include the adoption of the California Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism in 2007, the addition of a civility component to the attorney oath in 2014, and the work of the California Civility Task Force in 2021, which emphasized education-focused solutions. Those recommendations led to the civility MCLE requirement beginning with the compliance period ending January 31, 2025, and the annual civility declaration under California Rules of Court, rule 9.7. This progression reflects a shift from aspirational guidance toward structured education and reinforcement of existing professional obligations, while remaining mindful of constitutional limits. For consistency, this toolkit uses "Civility Oath" to describe the professional

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			commitment and “annual declaration” to describe the reporting requirement. **Joint Presentation Note (Optional):** A judicial officer may briefly comment on why predictability, professionalism, and respectful advocacy support court operations and public trust.
Slide 4 	**CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT DECISION re: RPC AMENDMENTS** “Although the Court appreciates the effort to promote civility, professionalism, and mutual respect within the legal profession, the Court is concerned that the proposed definition of prohibited incivility may present vagueness concerns under the First Amendment . . . . The Court encourages the State Bar to explore the possibility of codifying the existing case law reducing requests for attorney fees based on an attorney’s incivility. The State Bar is also encouraged to study the effect of the new continuing education requirements addressing civility in the legal profession.”	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Explain that the Court’s decision reflects constitutional limits, not opposition to civility. Explain the Court denied the proposed amendments to the California Rules of Professional Conduct. The Court was careful to protect constitutional boundaries while still affirming civility as a core professional value. Emphasize that the Court explicitly encouraged education and study. Throughout the course, maintain the distinction between aspirational guidelines, enforceable obligations, and constitutional limits. The purpose of this

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			program is preventative education and practical judgment, not rule expansion.
Slide 5 	**THE CIVILITY OATH** California Rules of Court, rule 9.7 Upon admission to practice law in California, attorneys are required to take an oath that includes the following civility commitment: **"As an officer of the court, I will strive to conduct myself at all times with dignity, courtesy and integrity."**	Lecture	Explain that since 2014, attorneys admitted to practice in California have taken an oath that expressly includes a commitment to conduct themselves with dignity, courtesy, and integrity. This civility language supplements the oath required by Business and Professions Code section 6067 and applies at the point of entry into the profession. Emphasize continuity rather than change. The oath does not create new standards of conduct but reinforces long-standing expectations of professionalism and the role of attorneys as officers of the court. Civility is presented as a foundational principle of legal practice in California, not a recent or disciplinary development.
Slide 6 	**THE ANNUAL DECLARATION** Recent Amendment to California Rules of Court, rule 9.7 In 2025, the Supreme Court amended rule 9.7 to require attorneys to	Lecture	Each active licensee and each special admissions attorney must, pursuant to the procedure adopted by the State Bar, declare adherence to the oath language provided by (a) of this rule and Professions Code section 6067 on an annual basis. Emphasize that it formalizes an existing commitment. This commitment to civility

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	annually declare adherence to the Civility Oath. The requirement reinforces an existing obligation rather than creating a new standard of conduct.		informs many of the existing Rules of Professional Conduct. Avoid discussion of penalties unless asked. The State Bar does have the authority under the rules to implement penalties for violations of this rule, including inactivating the attorney's license through the administrative process for failure to affirm the annual declaration.
Slide 7 	**NEW MCLE REQUIREMENT** One hour civility MCLE pursuant to State Bar Rule 2.72(C)(2)(a)(v). Effective January 31, 2025. This course satisfies the requirement.	Lecture	In its 2021 report, the Civility Task Force stated the following goal and rationale for adding the MCLE civility requirement: Explain that the civility MCLE requirement reflects a belief that education can positively influence professional culture. Emphasize that the oath and MCLE requirement reinforce an existing professional commitment rather than impose a new one. The goal is reflection and improvement, not compliance for its own sake.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 8 	**CIVILITY IS AN ESSENTIAL FUNCTION** "'[T]he necessity for civility is relevant to lawyers because they are the living exemplars—and thus teachers—every day in every case and in every court and their worst conduct will be emulated perhaps more readily than their best.'"	Lecture and Reflection	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Encourage participants to consider civility an essential function of their work as attorneys by reading aloud an inspirational quote from the California Court of Appeals: Ask the participants: "What stands out to you in this quote based on your own experience?" Invite one or two brief reflections before moving on. The presenter can also offer their perspective to help jumpstart the conversation. **Joint Presentation Note (Optional):** A judicial co-presenter may briefly comment on how attorney conduct in court affects courtroom efficiency, juror perception, and the court's ability to manage its docket, emphasizing that civility supports the court's core function rather than personal preference.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 9 	**CIVILITY IS A PROFESSIONAL PRINCIPLE** "We are professionals . . . and we have to conduct ourselves accordingly. Most of the profession understands this. The vast majority of lawyers know that professional speech must always be temperate and respectful and can never undermine confidence in the institution. **Respect for individual judges and specific decisions is a matter of personal opinion. Respect for the institution is not; it is a sine qua non."** (*In re Mahoney* (2021) 65 Cal.App.5th 376, 381.)	Lecture and Reflection	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Highlight that civility is a professional principle, by quoting the California Court of Appeals in another case: *Sine qua non* is a Latin phrase that means "without which not," in other words, something that is absolutely necessary. Emphasize that professionalism protects institutions, not just individuals. Ask participants to reflect on how professional speech affects trust in the system. (Ex: undermines trust in the legal system, attorneys, and judges; weakens confidence in judicial neutrality and fairness; reinforces negative public perceptions of the profession.)

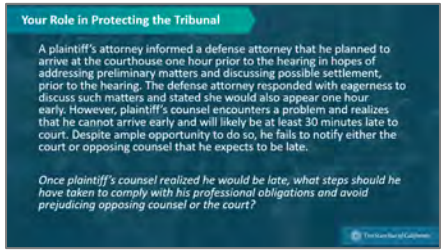
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 10 	**HOW IS CIVILITY MEASURED OR DEFINED?** California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism. Local rules of court. Codes of civility from local bar associations.	Lecture	Explain that civility in California is defined through guidance and professional norms rather than a single rule. The California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism describe expected conduct across a range of practice settings, and some courts and local bar associations have adopted the Guidelines or related civility codes through local rules or policies. Emphasize that civility shapes how advocacy is exercised, not whether advocacy occurs. Civility expectations focus on tone, conduct, and professional judgment in interactions with clients, opposing counsel, and the court. The ABA defines civility as “acting with formal politeness and courtesy when communicating or working with opposing parties, opposing counsel, clients, and outside parties.”

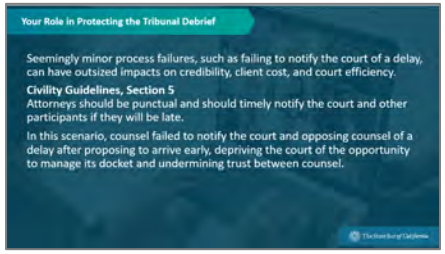
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	BLOCK 3: Civility Guidelines as Reference Framework (Approximate Time 4 minutes)		
Slide 11 	**THE CIVILITY GUIDELINES**	Lecture	Introduce the Civility Guidelines as a framework for understanding how civility is defined across different contexts in legal practice. Note that the Guidelines organize expectations across 21 sections, grouped by recurring themes in legal practice rather than bright-line rules. Point out that the next slide highlights those categories, which provides a more practical way to understand how civility is commonly defined and discussed. The Civility Guidelines also include a voluntary pledge that predates rule 9.7. It has no legal or disciplinary effect and is distinct from the required Civility Oath, but some organizations still use it as an internal professionalism tool. Share with the group which sections feel most relevant to your daily practice.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 12 	**CATEGORIES** Civility towards opposing counsel and opposing parties. Encouraging the development of a culture of civility within the profession. Civility towards the tribunal and respect for the justice system, generally. Guiding attorneys on controlling client expectations to maintain civility.	Lecture	Walk through the categories briefly. The Civility Guidelines can be grouped into 4 different categories: Civility towards opposing counsel and opposing parties. (Sections: 4, 6-10, 15, 18, 19 and 20). Encouraging the development of a culture of civility within the profession. (Sections 2 and 21). Civility towards the tribunal and respect for the justice system, generally. (Sections: 1, 4, 5, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 21). Guiding attorneys on controlling client expectations to maintain civility. (Sections 3 and 13). Emphasize that civility operates across relationships: counsel, clients, courts, and institutions. The California Civility Task Force report contains an appendix addressing bias-based incivility, along with a list of key cases and a corresponding memorandum

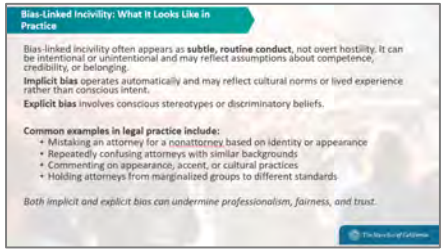
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			that address bias. This will be discussed later in the course.
	BLOCK 4: Scenario-Based Application and Professional Judgment (Approximate Time 23 minutes)		
Slide 13 	**HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN COURTROOM ADVOCACY** An attorney repeatedly interrupts opposing counsel during a hearing, raises their voice, and makes personal remarks about counsel's experience level. *Which of the following is the best response under the Civility Guidelines?* A. Ignore the conduct and return to the argument. B. Raise the concern respectfully with the court and request to proceed without interruption. C. Match the tone to avoid looking weak in front of the client. D. Immediately file a motion seeking sanctions.	Polling Question	If time is constrained, prioritize Slides 13–14 and treat remaining hypotheticals as brief reflections or optional discussion. Launch poll or ask participants for a show of hands as you list each option.

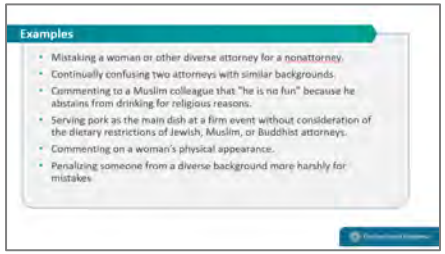
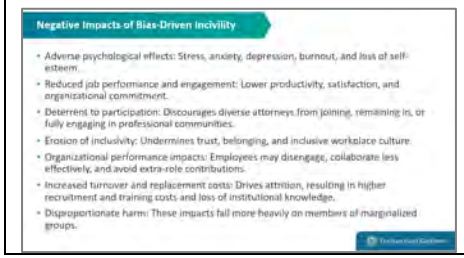
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 14 	**YOUR ROLE IN COURTROOM ADVOCACY DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL** When opposing counsel escalates behavior in court, your role is to protect credibility and fairness by responding through the court, not by matching tone. **Relevant Sections of the Civility Guidelines:** Section 1, Section 3, Section 4, and Section 10.	Debrief of Polling Question	Before identifying the preferred response, ask audience to consider: "What risks do you see in each option?" **Facilitation Note** **Option B reflects the approach most consistent with maintaining credibility with the court, protecting fairness in proceedings, and advancing the client's interests without escalating conflict.** This hypothetical involves the following concepts: Respectful conduct in court, civility promotes fairness, and attorneys must balance client pressure with professional responsibility. **Joint Presentation Note (Optional):** A judge may briefly comment on how interruptions or personal remarks affect courtroom dynamics and credibility. Time Management Note: If discussion exceeds the allotted time, summarize key points and proceed. The goal is reflection, not consensus. If time is constrained, prioritize this hypothetical for discussion and treat the remaining hypotheticals as brief reflections.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 15  	**HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN PROTECTING THE TRIBUNAL** A plaintiff's attorney informed a defense attorney that he planned to arrive at the courthouse one hour prior to the hearing in hopes of addressing preliminary matters and discussing possible settlement, prior to the hearing. The defense attorney responded with eagerness to discuss such matters and stated she would also appear one hour early. However, plaintiff's counsel encounters a problem and realizes that he cannot arrive early and will likely be at least 30 minutes late to court. Despite ample opportunity to do so, he fails to notify either the court or opposing counsel that he expects to be late. *Once plaintiff's counsel realized he would be late, what steps should he have taken to comply with his professional obligations and avoid prejudicing opposing counsel or the court?*	Reflection Question	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** If time permits as for responses, if not ask participants to reflect on what they would do and move to the next slide. This scenario begins with what appears to be a well-meaning attorney, but involves incivility directed at the tribunal, and opposing counsel. Present this as a common, not extreme, scenario.

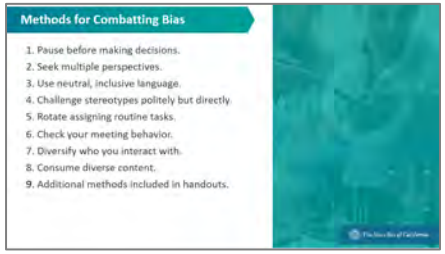
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 16  	**YOUR ROLE IN PROTECTING THE TRIBUNAL DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL** Seemingly minor process failures, such as failing to notify the court of a delay, can have outsized impacts on credibility, client cost, and court efficiency. Civility Guidelines, Section 5 Attorneys should be punctual and should timely notify the court and other participants if they will be late. In this scenario, counsel failed to notify the court and opposing counsel of a delay after proposing to arrive early, depriving the court of the opportunity to manage its docket and undermining trust between counsel.	Debrief Polling Question	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Emphasize that the issue is not intent, but process and impact. Protecting the tribunal includes timely communication that allows the court to manage its calendar and ensures fairness to all parties. The relevant Civility Guidelines include Sections 5. Many civility issues arise from preventable process breakdowns such as delayed communication, unmanaged tone, or unclear expectations. These habits are within the attorney's control and closely tied to competence and professionalism. When circumstances change, your role is to promptly notify the court and counsel to protect fairness, efficiency, and credibility. If discussion exceeds the allotted time, summarize key points and proceed. The goal is reflection, not consensus.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	BLOCK 5: Bias-Linked Incivility in Legal Practice (Approximate Time 5 minutes)		
Slide 17 	**BIAS-LINKED INCIVILITY**	Lecture	Bias can arise in many forms, including age, gender, race, culture, religion, and disability, and may surface in subtle ways during everyday professional interactions. Explain that the California Civility Task Force emphasized the need for civility education to address the relationship between incivility and bias, particularly how bias-driven conduct can undermine professionalism, fairness, and trust in the legal system. This content is included as part of civility education and professional responsibility, not as standalone diversity or inclusion training. Emphasize that the focus is on professional judgment and workplace conduct rather than personal beliefs, intent, or assigning blame.

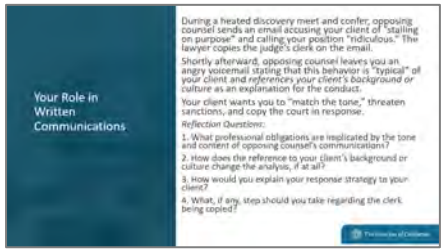
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 18  	**BIAS-LINKED INCIVILITY: WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE** Bias-linked incivility often appears as **subtle, routine conduct**, not overt hostility. It can be intentional or unintentional and may reflect assumptions about competence, credibility, or belonging. **Implicit bias** operates automatically and may reflect cultural norms or lived experience rather than conscious intent. **Explicit bias** involves conscious stereotypes or discriminatory beliefs. **Common examples in legal practice include:** -Mistaking an attorney for a nonattorney based on identity or appearance -Repeatedly confusing attorneys with similar backgrounds -Commenting on appearance, accent, or cultural practices Holding attorneys from marginalized groups to different standards	Lecture	This slide highlights how bias can appear as subtle, routine incivility in legal practice, often without conscious intent. Distinguishing implicit bias from explicit bias helps participants understand how assumptions, rather than hostility, can affect credibility, fairness, and trust. Use the examples to prompt reflection on everyday interactions rather than extreme misconduct. Encourage participants to focus on impact and professional judgment, including how attorneys can recognize and respond to bias-linked incivility in ways that align with the Civility Guidelines and existing professional obligations.

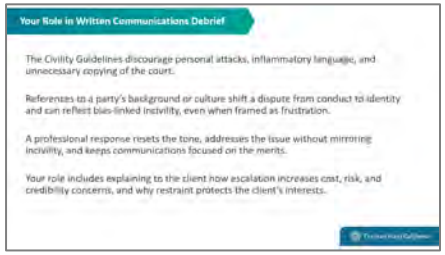
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	Both implicit and explicit bias can undermine professionalism, fairness, and trust.		
Slide 19 	**EXAMPLES** **Examples include:** -Mistaking a woman or other diverse attorney for a non-attorney. -Continually confusing two attorneys with similar backgrounds. -Commenting to a Muslim colleague that "he is no fun" because he abstains from drinking for religious reasons. -Serving pork as the main dish at a firm event without consideration of the dietary restrictions of Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist attorneys. -Commenting on a woman's physical appearance. -Penalizing someone from a diverse background more harshly for mistakes.	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Select one or two examples most relevant to the audience. Avoid covering the full list. Invite quiet reflection rather than open debate if needed.
Slide 20 	**NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF BIAS-DRIVEN INCIVILITY** **Adverse psychological effects:** Stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and loss of self-esteem.	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Discuss negative impacts of bias. Stress that we all have biases, that is part of being human, however, bringing awareness to these biases and engaging in

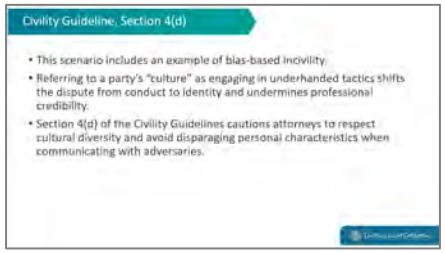
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	Reduced job performance and engagement: Lower productivity, satisfaction, and organizational commitment. **Deterrent to participation:** Discourages diverse attorneys from joining, remaining in, or fully engaging in professional communities. **Erosion of inclusivity:** Undermines trust, belonging, and inclusive workplace culture. **Organizational performance impacts:** Employees may disengage, collaborate less effectively, and avoid extra-role contributions. **Increased turnover and replacement costs:** Drives attrition, resulting in higher recruitment and training costs and loss of institutional knowledge. **Disproportionate harm:** These impacts fall more heavily on members of marginalized groups.		self-reflection helps us practice law with greater awareness and professionalism. Emphasize organizational and professional consequences. Avoid turning this into a sociology lecture. For specific data on the disparities, refer participants to Appendix 6 of the Civility Task Force Report for supporting data.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 21  	**METHODS FOR COMBATING BIAS** 1. Pause before making decisions. 2. Seek multiple perspectives. 3. Use neutral, inclusive language. 4. Challenge stereotypes politely but directly. 5. Rotate assigning routine tasks. 6. Check your meeting behavior. 7. Diversify who you interact with. 8. Consume diverse content. 9. Additional methods included in handouts.	Lecture and self-reflection	Discuss methods for combating bias. 1. Pause before making decisions. Ask if your decision would be the same if the person was from a different group. 2. Seek multiple perspectives. Actively ask for input from colleagues with different backgrounds or roles. 3. Use neutral, inclusive language. -Using *"counsel"* instead of gendered terms. -*"Let's clarify the issue"* instead of *"That makes no sense."* -*"Can you walk me through your position?"* instead of *"You're wrong."* 4. Challenge stereotypes politely but directly. -*"I want to be careful about generalizing. What's the concrete issue we're trying to resolve?"* -*"Let's think about this in another way."* -*"I don't think that characterization is fair or necessary to the point we're making."* 5. Rotate assigning routine tasks. Volunteer for routine tasks sometimes (taking notes, scheduling, cleanup) and support fair rotation so these tasks don't

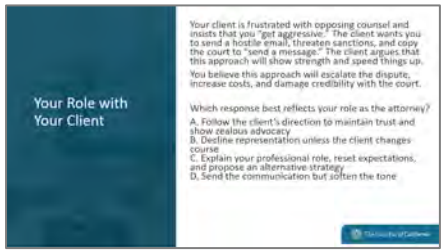
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			fall disproportionately on women or junior staff. 6. Check your meeting behavior. -Notice who speaks and who gets interrupted. -Make space: *"I'd love to hear ___'s perspective."* -Credit ideas accurately. 7. Diversify who you interact with. -Seek input from junior attorneys or staff -Work with attorney from different practice areas of firm sizes -Engage with affinity bar associations 8. Consume diverse content. -Even at work, choose to read articles, newsletters, or follow voices from varied backgrounds; this steadily reduces implicit bias. Emphasize small, repeatable actions. Based on today's discussion, identify one specific practice change you will make to support civility in your daily work. This could relate to client communication, written tone, courtroom conduct, or internal collaboration.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 22 	**HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION** During a heated discovery meet and confer, opposing counsel sends an email accusing your client of "stalling on purpose" and calling your position "ridiculous." The lawyer copies the judge's clerk on the email. Shortly afterward, opposing counsel leaves you an angry voicemail stating that this behavior is "typical" of your client and *references your client's background or culture* as an explanation for the conduct. Your client wants you to "match the tone," threaten sanctions, and copy the court in response. *Reflection Questions:* 1. What professional obligations are implicated by the tone and content of opposing counsel's communications? 2. How does the reference to your client's background or culture change the analysis, if at all? 3. How would you explain your response strategy to your client?	Polling Questions	For each question, call on participants who raise their hands to offer a discussion. Alternatively, you may ask learners to reflect silently on each question before you debrief the polling questions.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	4. What, if any, step should you take regarding the clerk being copied?		
Slide 23  	**YOUR ROLE IN WRITTEN COMMUNICATION DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL** The Civility Guidelines discourage personal attacks, inflammatory language, and unnecessary copying of the court. References to a party's background or culture shift a dispute from conduct to identity and can reflect bias-linked incivility, even when framed as frustration. A professional response resets the tone, addresses the issue without mirroring incivility, and keeps communications focused on the merits. Your role includes explaining to the client how escalation increases cost, risk, and credibility concerns, and why restraint protects the client's interests.	Debrief Polling Questions	Your role in written communications is to model professionalism, manage tone under pressure, and protect your client's interests without escalating conflict or creating avoidable risk. References to a party's background or culture illustrate how disputes can move from conduct to identity and reflect bias-linked incivility, even when framed as frustration rather than hostility. The emphasis should remain on impact and professional judgment, not intent. A professional response resets the tone, avoids mirroring incivility, and keeps communications focused on the merits. This includes explaining to the client how escalation can increase cost, risk, and credibility concerns, and why restraint better serves the client's interests. If discussion becomes circular or overly detailed, summarize key takeaways and move forward. The goal is reflection and practical judgment, not consensus.

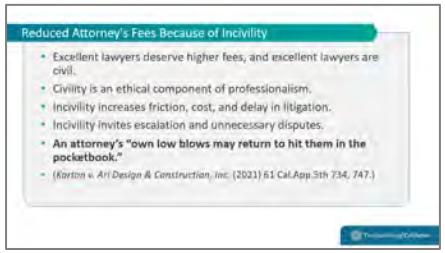
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 24 	**CIVILITY GUIDELINE, SECTION 4(d)** This scenario includes an example of bias-based incivility. Referring to a party's "culture" as engaging in underhanded tactics shifts the dispute from conduct to identity and undermines professional credibility. Section 4(d) of the Civility Guidelines cautions attorneys to respect cultural diversity and avoid disparaging personal characteristics when communicating with adversaries.	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Continue debriefing the polling question by discussing the bias linked incivility in the previous scenario. Consider: -What assumptions are embedded in the reference to the client's 'culture'? -How does this language shift the dispute from conduct to identity? -How might this statement affect credibility with the court? When addressing adversarial conduct, your role is to focus on actions and process, not identity or personal characteristics.
Slide 25 	**HOW CIVILITY IS ADDRESSED THROUGH EXISTING PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORKS**		**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Introduce existing professional frameworks address incivility in limited circumstances. Civility is not enforced through a single rule. It is reflected across existing professional obligations that govern how attorneys communicate, manage cases, and interact with the court.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			These frameworks emphasize: -Professional judgment and restraint -Efficient case management -Protection of the integrity of the legal process -Fairness to clients, opposing parties, and the court
Slide 26 	**EXISTING PROFESSIONAL FRAMEWORKS** **State Bar Act** Duties requiring honesty, respect for courts, and integrity in practice. **Rules of Professional Conduct** Rules that regulate how advocacy is exercised to protect fairness, efficiency, and the integrity of the legal process.	Lecture/ Discussion	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Use this slide as a framing moment, not a lecture slide. **Discussion Prompt** -Ask first, then pause: "If the Civility Guidelines themselves are voluntary, where do civility expectations actually come from?" -Let participants respond briefly. **Then transition:** "Many of those expectations already exist in the rules and statutes that govern everyday practice." **Reinforce:** -Civility is not new. -Civility is not optional. -The Guidelines translate existing obligations into practical behavior.

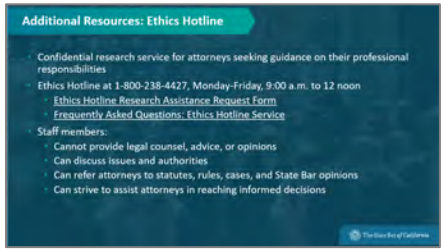
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
			A list of the existing framework is included in the course handout, "How Civility Is Reflected in Existing Professional Frameworks."
Slide 27 	**HYPOTHETICAL: YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR CLIENT** Your client is frustrated with opposing counsel and insists that you "get aggressive." The client wants you to send a hostile email, threaten sanctions, and copy the court to "send a message." The client argues that this approach will show strength and speed things up. You believe this approach will escalate the dispute, increase costs, and damage credibility with the court. **Polling or Discussion Prompt** Which response best reflects your role as the attorney? A. Follow the client's direction to maintain trust and show zealous advocacy B. Decline representation unless the client changes course C. Explain your professional role, reset	Lecture	Acknowledge openly that client pressure is one of the most common sources of incivility. **Facilitation Note** **Option C reflects the exercise of independent professional judgment and effective client management consistent with the Civility Guidelines.** This answer reflects independent professional judgment, leadership rather than escalation, protection of the client's interests, and alignment with civility as competence, not weakness. Emphasize that Rule 1.2 gives attorneys authority over professional conduct and strategy, even when clients push for aggressive behavior. Civility is often tested not by opposing counsel, but by our own clients' expectations.

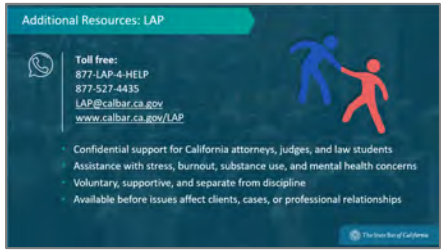
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	expectations, and propose an alternative strategy D. Send the communication but soften the tone		
Slide 28 	**YOUR ROLE WITH YOUR CLIENT** **DEBRIEF OF HYPOTHETICAL** Client pressure is a common source of incivility. An attorney's role is to exercise independent professional judgment and set boundaries around how advocacy is carried out. Civility does not mean abandoning the client's goals. It means choosing strategies that advance those goals without creating unnecessary risk, cost, or delay.	Lecture/ Polling	Attorneys are responsible for professional conduct and strategy, even when clients push for aggressive or counterproductive behavior. **Discussion Prompts (Choose One or Two)** -How would you explain this boundary to the client without sounding dismissive? -What risks does the client's proposed approach create for the case? -How can you reframe civility as protecting the client's interests? When client pressure escalates, your role is to lead and guide, not mirror.

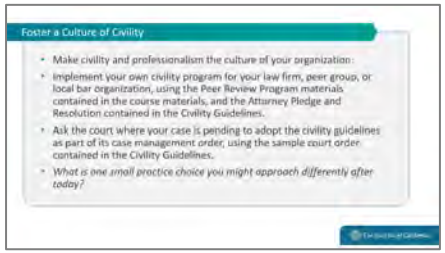
Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	BLOCK 6: Consequences of Incivility and Professional Risk (Approximate Time 4 minutes)		
Slide 29 	**CONSEQUENCES OF INCIVILITY** **1. State Bar Disciplinary Proceedings** Any violation of the State Bar Act or the California Rules of Professional Conduct. **2. Court Contempt Proceedings** Judge must take "appropriate corrective action" for attorney misconduct. **3. Attorney Reporting Requirements** If attorney is sanctioned $1,000 or more. **4. Court Reporting Requirements** Certain contempt orders and sanctions.	Lecture	Present this slide factually and briefly. Avoid speculating about future rulemaking or disciplinary changes. The focus of this program is education within existing professional frameworks. Emphasize that consequences arise from violations of existing laws and rules, not from the Civility Guidelines themselves. Judicial authority derives from the California Code of Judicial Ethics, Canon 3D(2), which requires judges to take appropriate corrective action in response to attorney misconduct. Attorney reporting obligations arise under Business and Professions Code section 6068(o)(3), which requires attorneys to report judicial sanctions exceeding $1,000, unless the sanction is discovery related. These are not new consequences. They are existing mechanisms that reflect how seriously professional conduct is taken.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 30 	**REDUCED ATTORNEY'S FEES BECAUSE OF INCIVILITY** Excellent lawyers deserve higher fees, and excellent lawyers are civil. Civility is an ethical component of professionalism. Incivility increases friction, cost, and delay in litigation. Incivility invites escalation and unnecessary disputes. **An attorney's "own low blows may return to hit them in the pocketbook."** (*Karton v. Ari Design & Construction, Inc.* (2021) 61 Cal.App.5th 734, 747.)	Lecture	Another possible consequence of incivility is a reduction in attorney's fees. In *Karton v. Ari Design & Construction, Inc.* (2021), the Court of Appeal held that incivility may justify a reduction in attorney's fees in fee shifting cases. The court treated civility as an aspect of professional skill and explained that incivility increases cost, friction, and inefficiency in litigation. As a result, an attorney's conduct can directly affect the reasonableness of a fee request. (*Karton v. Ari Design & Construction, Inc.* (2021) 61 Cal.App.5th 734, 747.)
Slide 31 	**CONSTITUTIONAL LIMITS ON CIVILITY** Civility expectations operate within constitutional limits. Professional standards governing attorney conduct do not prohibit speech or activity protected by the First Amendment or the California Constitution.	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Recognize that civility expectations operate within constitutional boundaries, particularly where speech is concerned. Emphasize that the California Supreme Court declined certain rule amendments in late 2025 due to vagueness and First

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	Civility guidance focuses on professional judgment, process, and conduct within the legal system, not on restricting protected expression.		Amendment concerns, not opposition to civility. Reinforce the distinction between protected speech and conduct. Rule 8.4(d), comment [6], clarifies that professional conduct rules do not prohibit constitutionally protected speech. This reinforces that civility education is not about suppressing advocacy or expression, but about professional judgment within the legal profession.
	BLOCK 7: Fostering a Culture of Civility and Professional Support (Approximate Time 4 minutes)		
Slide 32 	**RESOURCES** California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism. Local Rules of Court. Local Bar Associations' Codes of Civility. Key California Civility Cases and Memorandum by California Civility	Lecture	**Optional slide. Hidden by default.** Briefly highlight the resources available. Emphasize that these tools are designed to support judgment and professionalism, not serve as compliance checklists. Encourage participants to use them proactively. The handouts include materials that can help attorneys, law firms and local bar

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
	Task Force Members re Civility Research.		associations implement peer review programs.
Slide 33  	**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES—ETHICS HOTLINE** Confidential research service for attorneys seeking guidance on their professional responsibilities Ethics Hotline at 1-800-238-4427, Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon **Ethics Hotline Research Assistance Request Form** **Frequently Asked Questions: Ethics Hotline Service** Staff members: -Cannot provide legal counsel, advice, or opinions -Can discuss issues and authorities -Can refer attorneys to statutes, rules, cases, and State Bar opinions -Can strive to assist attorneys in reaching informed decisions	Lecture	The ethics hotline is a confidential research service for California attorneys seeking guidance on their professional responsibilities. The purpose of the Ethics Hotline is educational. It does not initiate discipline and does not provide legal advice or binding opinions. Instead, it helps attorneys think through ethical issues and identify relevant rules so they can make informed decisions. From a civility perspective, many situations that escalate into uncivil conduct start with uncertainty about how to respond appropriately, particularly when client pressure, deadlines, or emotionally charged disputes are involved. Reaching out to the Ethics Hotline can help attorneys pause, reflect, and choose a response that aligns with their professional obligations.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 34 	**ADDITIONAL RESOURCES-LAP** **Toll free:** 877-LAP-4-HELP 877-527-4435 LAP@calbar.ca.gov www.calbar.ca.gov/LAP -Confidential support for California attorneys, judges, and law students -Assistance with stress, burnout, substance use, and mental health concerns -Voluntary, supportive, and separate from discipline -Available before issues affect clients, cases, or professional relationships	Lecture	The State Bar's Lawyer Assistance Program, or LAP, provides confidential support to attorneys who may be experiencing stress, burnout, substance use concerns, or mental health challenges. LAP services are voluntary and confidential, and they are separate from the disciplinary system. The goal is early support, not punishment. LAP offers resources such as confidential consultations, peer support, referrals, and educational materials. Knowing about and using resources like LAP is one way attorneys can proactively support their ability to practice law with competence, professionalism, and civility. From a civility perspective, many breakdowns in professional interactions occur when attorneys are overwhelmed, exhausted, or under sustained pressure. Accessing support early can help attorneys maintain judgment, professionalism, and respectful interactions with clients, opposing counsel, and the court.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 35  	**FOSTER A CULTURE OF CIVILITY** Make civility and professionalism the culture of your organization. Implement your own civility program for your law firm, peer group, or local bar organization, using the Peer Review Program materials contained in the course materials, and the Attorney Pledge and Resolution contained in the Civility Guidelines. Ask the court where your case is pending to adopt the civility guidelines as part of its case management order, using the sample court order contained in the Civility Guidelines. *What is one small practice choice you might approach differently after today?*	Lecture/ Reflection	Close by reinforcing that civility is a collective, professional culture rather than an individual burden. Encourage participants to think about how they can model civility and influence peers. The more attorneys who participate, the more the profession can strengthen and grow a culture of civility—which will improve the quality of life of all hard-working attorneys, who already face more stress than almost any other profession. Suggested closing prompt and commitment to civility: “What is one small practice choice you might approach differently after today?” Thank participants for their engagement and offer to answer any outstanding questions.

Slides	Content	Teaching Method	Faculty Notes
Slide 36 	**INSTRUCTIONS TO RECEIVE MCLE CREDIT** **[Include how you will verify attendance]** [Additional Instructions for Receiving MCLE Credit] [You must sign in to receive MCLE credit.] [After we have verified your attendance, we will send you an email containing links to the MCLE certificate, written materials, PDF of the PowerPoint presentation, and the MCLE program evaluation form. This may take up to 3 business days.]		Provide instructions to receive MCLE credit certificate and ask participants to complete the survey about the program.

CIVILITY AND PROFESSIONALISM COURSE HANDOUTS

The following handouts hyperlinked below include:

1. Full set of the Civility Guidelines with examples, sample pledge, sample resolution and sample court order
2. Key California Civility Cases and Memorandum by California Civility Task Force Members re: Civility Caselaw Research
3. Sample instructions and forms for implementing a Voluntary Peer Review Counseling Program on civility
4. Initial Report of the California Civility Task Force (September 2021)
5. How Civility Is Reflected in Existing Professional Frameworks
6. Combatting implicit bias and stereotypes, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

SUMMARY OF CONCEPTS

- Civility has become part of the attorney oath, and is an obligation, which every licensee shall declare annually. The oath reinforces existing professional responsibilities rather than creating new disciplinary standards.
- The Civility Guidelines serve as a guide for what that means. They provide a shared framework for professional judgment rather than rigid rules.
- Relevant case law, the State Bar Act and certain Rules of Professional Conduct provide additional standards.
- Attorneys can assist each other by making civility part of the culture of the profession.
- One useful tool is to implement a voluntary peer review counseling program. Another method is to request that courts use the sample court order as part of their case management order.

BIAS-LINKED INCIVILITY: PRACTICAL REFERENCE

Bias-linked incivility often arises in subtle, routine interactions rather than overt hostility. It may reflect implicit assumptions about competence, credibility, or belonging, even when no harm is intended. Examples in legal practice may include:

- Mistaking an attorney for a nonlawyer based on identity or appearance
- Repeatedly confusing attorneys with similar backgrounds
- Comments about appearance, accent, or cultural practices
- Applying different expectations or standards to attorneys based on identity

Key distinction:

- *Implicit bias* operates automatically and may reflect cultural norms or lived experience rather than conscious intent.
- *Explicit bias* involves conscious stereotypes or discriminatory beliefs.

The focus for attorneys is not determining intent but recognizing impact and responding in ways that preserve professionalism, fairness, and trust.

RESPONDING TO BIAS-LINKED INCIVILITY

When bias-linked incivility arises, attorneys may consider the following professional responses:

- Pause and assess whether the issue involves conduct, tone, or assumptions rather than merits
- Address the behavior directly and professionally without escalating conflict
- Recenter communications on the legal issue or procedural step at hand
- Explain to clients how escalation can increase cost, risk, or credibility concerns
- Seek guidance or support when patterns persist or impact professional functioning

These strategies are intended to support professional judgment, not to mandate specific responses.

PRACTICAL GUIDANCE AND NEXT STEPS

For individual attorneys

- Use the Civility Guidelines as a reference point when navigating difficult interactions with clients, opposing counsel, or the court.
- Reflect on how routine practices and communication styles may affect professionalism and trust.

For firms, courts, and organizations

- Consider implementing a voluntary peer review counseling program using the provided sample materials.
- Courts may incorporate civility expectations into case management orders using the sample court order.

CLOSING REFLECTION

Civility is sustained through daily professional choices rather than isolated moments. The materials in this toolkit are intended to support reflection, shared expectations, and constructive responses to conflict. Attorneys are encouraged to use these resources as ongoing reference points in their practice.

The State Bar of California

Civility in Practice: Navigating Professional Responsibilities

Add Presenters' names and roles

Date of Presentation

Course Overview

- Civility as a professional responsibility and shared obligation
- The Civility Oath and the annual declaration
- How civility is understood and applied in practice
- Scenario-based discussion of advocacy, communication, and client management
- Recognizing and responding to bias-linked incivility
- Practical consequences and fostering a culture of civility

Civility in California: Key Milestones

2007
Civility Guidelines adopted

2014
Civility added to oath

2021
Civility Task Force Report

2025
Civility MCLE requirement

2025
Annual Civility Declaration

California Supreme Court Decision re: RPC Amendments

"Although the Court appreciates the effort to promote civility, professionalism, and mutual respect within the legal profession, the Court is concerned that the proposed definition of prohibited incivility may present vagueness concerns under the First Amendment. . . .

The Court encourages the State Bar to explore the possibility of codifying the existing case law reducing requests for attorney fees based on an attorney's incivility. The State Bar is also encouraged to study the effect of the new continuing education requirements addressing civility in the legal profession."

The Civility Oath

California Rules of Court, rule 9.7

Upon admission to practice law in California, attorneys are required to take an oath that includes the following civility commitment:

"As an officer of the court, I will strive to conduct myself at all times with dignity, courtesy and integrity."

Annual Declaration– Recent Amendment

Recent Amendment to California Rules of Court, rule 9.7

In 2025, the Supreme Court amended rule 9.7 to require attorneys to **annually declare adherence to the civility oath**.

The requirement reinforces an existing obligation rather than creating a new standard of conduct.



New MCLE Requirement

- One hour civility MCLE pursuant to State Bar Rule 2.72(C)(2)(a)(v).
- Effective January 31, 2025.
- This course satisfies the requirement.



Civility —
An Essential Professional Function

"'[T]he necessity for civility is relevant to lawyers because they are the living exemplars—and thus teachers—every day in every case and in every court and their worst conduct will be emulated perhaps more readily than their best.'" (*Lasalle v. Vogel* (2019) 36 Cal.App.5th 127, 141 [quoting Chief Justice Warren E. Burger, The Necessity for Civility, Address to the American Law Institute, (1971) 52 F.R.D. 211].)



Civility —
A Professional Principle

"We are professionals. . . and we have to conduct ourselves accordingly. Most of the profession understands this. The vast majority of lawyers know that professional speech must always be temperate and respectful and can never undermine confidence in the institution. . . **Respect for individual judges and specific decisions is a matter of personal opinion. Respect for the institution is not; it is a sine qua non."** (*In re Mahoney* (2021) 65 Cal.App.5th 376, 381.)

How is "civility" measured or defined?



California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism.



Local rules of court.



Codes of civility from local bar associations.

The Civility Guidelines

Categories

Civility towards opposing counsel and parties.

Fostering a culture of civility.

Civility towards tribunal and justice system.

Guiding attorneys on controlling client expectations.

Your Role in Courtroom Advocacy

An attorney repeatedly interrupts opposing counsel during a hearing, raises their voice, and makes personal remarks about counsel's experience level.

Which of the following is the best response under the Civility Guidelines?

A. Ignore the conduct and return to the argument.

B. Raise the concern respectfully with the court and request to proceed without interruption.

C. Match the tone to avoid looking weak in front of the client.

D. Immediately file a motion seeking sanctions.



Your Role in Courtroom Advocacy Debrief

When opposing counsel escalates behavior in court, your role is to protect credibility and fairness by responding through the court, not by matching tone.

Relevant Sections of the Civility Guidelines:

Section 1,

Section 3,

Section 4, and

Section 10.



Your Role in Protecting the Tribunal

A plaintiff's attorney informed a defense attorney that he planned to arrive at the courthouse one hour prior to the hearing in hopes of addressing preliminary matters and discussing possible settlement, prior to the hearing. The defense attorney responded with eagerness to discuss such matters and stated she would also appear one hour early. However, plaintiff's counsel encounters a problem and realizes that he cannot arrive early and will likely be at least 30 minutes late to court. Despite ample opportunity to do so, he fails to notify either the court or opposing counsel that he expects to be late.

Once plaintiff's counsel realized he would be late, what steps should he have taken to comply with his professional obligations and avoid prejudicing opposing counsel or the court?

Your Role in Protecting the Tribunal Debrief

Seemingly minor process failures, such as failing to notify the court of a delay, can have outsized impacts on credibility, client cost, and court efficiency.

Civility Guidelines, Section 5
Attorneys should be punctual and should timely notify the court and other participants if they will be late.

In this scenario, counsel failed to notify the court and opposing counsel of a delay after proposing to arrive early, depriving the court of the opportunity to manage its docket and undermining trust between counsel.

Bias-linked Incivility

Bias-Linked Incivility: What It Looks Like in Practice

Bias-linked incivility often appears as **subtle, routine conduct**, not overt hostility. It can be intentional or unintentional and may reflect assumptions about competence, credibility, or belonging.

Implicit bias operates automatically and may reflect cultural norms or lived experience rather than conscious intent.

Explicit bias involves conscious stereotypes or discriminatory beliefs.

Common examples in legal practice include:

- Mistaking an attorney for a nonattorney based on identity or appearance
- Repeatedly confusing attorneys with similar backgrounds
- Commenting on appearance, accent, or cultural practices
- Holding attorneys from marginalized groups to different standards

Both implicit and explicit bias can undermine professionalism, fairness, and trust.

Examples

- Mistaking a woman or other diverse attorney for a nonattorney.
- Continually confusing two attorneys with similar backgrounds.
- Commenting to a Muslim colleague that “he is no fun” because he abstains from drinking for religious reasons.
- Serving pork as the main dish at a firm event without consideration of the dietary restrictions of Jewish, Muslim, or Buddhist attorneys.
- Commenting on a woman’s physical appearance.
- Penalizing someone from a diverse background more harshly for mistakes.

Negative Impacts of Bias-Driven Incivility

- Adverse psychological effects: Stress, anxiety, depression, burnout, and loss of self-esteem.
- Reduced job performance and engagement: Lower productivity, satisfaction, and organizational commitment.
- Deterrent to participation: Discourages diverse attorneys from joining, remaining in, or fully engaging in professional communities.
- Erosion of inclusivity: Undermines trust, belonging, and inclusive workplace culture.
- Organizational performance impacts: Employees may disengage, collaborate less effectively, and avoid extra-role contributions.
- Increased turnover and replacement costs: Drives attrition, resulting in higher recruitment and training costs and loss of institutional knowledge.
- Disproportionate harm: These impacts fall more heavily on members of marginalized groups.

Methods for Combatting Bias

1. Pause before making decisions.
2. Seek multiple perspectives.
3. Use neutral, inclusive language.
4. Challenge stereotypes politely but directly.
5. Rotate assigning routine tasks.
6. Check your meeting behavior.
7. Diversify who you interact with.
8. Consume diverse content.
9. Additional methods included in handouts.



Your Role in Written Communications

During a heated discovery meet and confer, opposing counsel sends an email accusing your client of "stalling on purpose" and calling your position "ridiculous." The lawyer copies the judge's clerk on the email.

Shortly afterward, opposing counsel leaves you an angry voicemail stating that this behavior is "typical" of your client and *references your client's background or culture* as an explanation for the conduct.

Your client wants you to "match the tone," threaten sanctions, and copy the court in response.

Reflection Questions:

1. What professional obligations are implicated by the tone and content of opposing counsel's communications?

2. How does the reference to your client's background or culture change the analysis, if at all?

3. How would you explain your response strategy to your client?

4. What, if any, step should you take regarding the clerk being copied?

Your Role in Written Communications Debrief

The Civility Guidelines discourage personal attacks, inflammatory language, and unnecessary copying of the court.

References to a party's background or culture shift a dispute from conduct to identity and can reflect bias-linked incivility, even when framed as frustration.

A professional response resets the tone, addresses the issue without mirroring incivility, and keeps communications focused on the merits.

Your role includes explaining to the client how escalation increases cost, risk, and credibility concerns, and why restraint protects the client's interests.

Civility Guideline, Section 4(d)

- This scenario includes an example of bias-based incivility.
- Referring to a party's "culture" as engaging in underhanded tactics shifts the dispute from conduct to identity and undermines professional credibility.
- Section 4(d) of the Civility Guidelines cautions attorneys to respect cultural diversity and avoid disparaging personal characteristics when communicating with adversaries.

How Civility is Addressed Through Existing Professional Frameworks



Existing Professional Frameworks

- **State Bar Act**
  Duties requiring honesty, respect for courts, and integrity in practice.
- **Rules of Professional Conduct**
  Rules that regulate how advocacy is exercised to protect fairness, efficiency, and the integrity of the legal process.

Your Role with Your Client

Your client is frustrated with opposing counsel and insists that you “get aggressive.” The client wants you to send a hostile email, threaten sanctions, and copy the court to “send a message.” The client argues that this approach will show strength and speed things up.

You believe this approach will escalate the dispute, increase costs, and damage credibility with the court.

Which response best reflects your role as the attorney?

A. Follow the client’s direction to maintain trust and show zealous advocacy
B. Decline representation unless the client changes course
C. Explain your professional role, reset expectations, and propose an alternative strategy
D. Send the communication but soften the tone

Debrief: Your Role with Your Client

- Client pressure is a common source of incivility.
- An attorney's role is to exercise independent professional judgment and set boundaries around how advocacy is carried out.
- Civility does not mean abandoning the client's goals. It means choosing strategies that advance those goals without creating unnecessary risk, cost, or delay.

Consequences of Incivility



State Bar Disciplinary Proceedings

Any violation of the State Bar Act/RPC.



Court Contempt Proceedings

Judge must take “appropriate corrective action."



Attorney Reporting Requirements

If attorney is sanctioned $1,000 or more.



Court Reporting Requirements

Certain contempt orders and sanctions.

Reduced Attorney's Fees Because of Incivility

- Excellent lawyers deserve higher fees, and excellent lawyers are civil.
- Civility is an ethical component of professionalism.
- Incivility increases friction, cost, and delay in litigation.
- Incivility invites escalation and unnecessary disputes.
- **An attorney's "own low blows may return to hit them in the pocketbook."**
- (*Karton v. Ari Design & Construction, Inc.* (2021) 61 Cal.App.5th 734, 747.)

Constitutional Limits on Civility

Civility expectations operate within constitutional limits.

Professional standards governing attorney conduct do not prohibit speech or activity protected by the First Amendment or the California Constitution.

Civility guidance focuses on professional judgment, process, and conduct within the legal system, not on restricting protected expression.



Resources

- California Attorney Guidelines of Civility and Professionalism.
- Local Rules of Court.
- Local Bar Associations' Codes of Civility.
- Key California Civility Cases and Memorandum by California Civility Task Force Members re Civility Research.

Additional Resources: Ethics Hotline

- Confidential research service for attorneys seeking guidance on their professional responsibilities
- Ethics Hotline at 1-800-238-4427, Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon
  - Ethics Hotline Research Assistance Request Form
  - Frequently Asked Questions: Ethics Hotline Service
- Staff members:
  - Cannot provide legal counsel, advice, or opinions
  - Can discuss issues and authorities
  - Can refer attorneys to statutes, rules, cases, and State Bar opinions
  - Can strive to assist attorneys in reaching informed decisions

Additional Resources: LAP

Toll free:
877-LAP-4-HELP
877-527-4435
LAP@calbar.ca.gov
www.calbar.ca.gov/LAP



- Confidential support for California attorneys, judges, and law students
- Assistance with stress, burnout, substance use, and mental health concerns
- Voluntary, supportive, and separate from discipline
- Available before issues affect clients, cases, or professional relationships

Foster a Culture of Civility

- Make civility and professionalism the culture of your organization.
- Implement your own civility program for your law firm, peer group, or local bar organization, using the Peer Review Program materials contained in the course materials, and the Attorney Pledge and Resolution contained in the Civility Guidelines.
- Ask the court where your case is pending to adopt the civility guidelines as part of its case management order, using the sample court order contained in the Civility Guidelines.
- *What is one small practice choice you might approach differently after today?*



Instructions to Receive MCLE credit

- **[Include how you will verify attendance]**
  - [Additional Instructions for Receiving MCLE Credit]
  - [You must sign in to receive MCLE credit.]
  - [After we have verified your attendance, we will send you an email containing links to the MCLE certificate, written materials, PDF of the PowerPoint presentation, and the MCLE program evaluation form. This may take up to 3 business days.]