

# **Harassment Protocol**

## **Ad-Hoc Committee on Harassment Cornell University Library April 2022**

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## INTRODUCTION

In December 2021, Judith Appleton, Senior Vice Provost, created the Ad-Hoc Committee on Harassment as an advisory group with the following charge:

*Using the [Faculty Senate committee's document\(s\)](#) as a guide, develop a protocol specific to the Library that will provide immediate, personal support to a member of the library community when professional harassment first occurs. Areas of focus would include physical safety, emotional wellbeing, and professional responsibilities. The protocol would indicate 'who, what, how' for each area and the committee may consider creating a response team for such situations.*

Over the course of the committee's meetings, members shared their knowledge and experiences regarding professional harassment and met with colleagues across campus to better understand work-related harassment. The committee also explored how to best support individuals who become targets of such harassment.

Harassment is complicated: What someone targeted by threatening communications experiences will differ depending on the individual and the types and severity of harassment they receive. There are also related issues, outlined in a separate document, that fall outside the scope of the ad-hoc committee's work. CUL may wish to further explore these issues in the future.

Lastly, today's social, cultural, and political environment has created a climate of increased intolerance for ideas with which one may disagree. This has led to an increase in all forms of harassment.<sup>1</sup> Cornell University Library, as the "center of Cornell's vibrant intellectual life,"<sup>2</sup> should stand up against hatred and intolerance, support the academic freedom for our staff, and seek understanding through listening and compassion.

The ad-hoc committee thanks Eliza Bettinger, Jodi Lynn Condzella, Scott Grantz, Neil Anthony Lewis, Jr., J. Nathan Matias, Alison Shea, Bryan Solis, and Laura Weiss for sharing their expertise and experiences. We also thank Michelle Eastman for her administrative support.

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<sup>1</sup> Pew Research Center. "The State of Online Harassment," January 13, 2021.  
<https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2021/01/13/the-state-of-online-harassment/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cornell.edu/academics/library.cfm>

## HARASSMENT PROTOCOL

It is vital to keep the support centered on the individual who is being targeted and provide them with as much control as possible in a situation where they have very little control over the act of harassment. While the following are recommended actions, the affected individual should choose how to proceed based on their own preferences and experience. The following steps should be taken immediately after an incident has occurred:

### Step 1: Assessing danger

If the targeted staff member feels in immediate danger, call 911, or the Cornell Police at 607-255-1111.

### Step 2: Contact the Victim Advocacy Program

The target of harassment or their advocates may want to contact the **Victim Advocacy Program** for support.

The target of attack might want to consider the following questions to help decide on a course of action:

- Do you want to assign someone to look at your email, social media, etc...? Do you have someone specific in mind? Do you want to preserve the hateful messages?
- Do you want your information removed from Cornell's website? Would it make you feel safer? Would you rather continue your presence as evidence of your continued employment at Cornell?
- Do you feel physically threatened? What are the sources of danger? What actions would make you feel safe?

Experts at the Victim Advocacy Program can help the targeted individual think through these and related questions so they can decide how to proceed.

The Victim Advocacy Program can be contacted when someone has been made a target of harassment. Confidentiality is the foundation of the program with a focus on the person who is being attacked. This service is well suited to support not only the target, but also third parties, such as supervisors, colleagues, and partners, who may be trying to provide support to the target. The program can work in conjunction with or independently from the work being done with the target of the harassment, pending on what the person experiencing harassment would like to do. It is important to note that this is not a crisis service. The program's hours are Monday-Friday from 9AM to 5PM and its staff can be contacted via their email [victimadvocate@cornell.edu](mailto:victimadvocate@cornell.edu) or phone 607-255-1212.

Advocates provide:

- Personal support and an opportunity to talk about what happened
- Information and answers to questions about options and resources
- Help thinking through and deciding on a course of action
- Connection with campus, community, and state resources for counseling, advising, or reporting

- Connection with University offices (when appropriate, advocates can work with faculty and staff)

### **Step 3: Contact the Target's Supervisor**

If you have a particularly close relationship with your supervisor, you may consider contacting them prior to working with the Victim Advocacy Program (Step 2, above).

The supervisor should work with the target, the Victim Advocacy Program (described above) and Library Human Resources to support the employee. If other resources need to be deployed, the supervisor can help to connect the target with these resources in close consultation with the person experiencing the harassment, based on their individual needs. The supervisor should follow-up periodically with their supervisee to ensure their well-being. The supervisor can also:

- Connect the employee with Faculty and Staff Assistant Program that can provide emotional support
- With HR, offer time off to attend to harassment-related abatement issues and record time as appropriate or per University policy.
- Offer to adjust service duties, if applicable, when staff member returns to work, to alleviate public-facing time and burden.
- Offer to fund the DeleteMe service/subscription. This service deletes online personal information, preventing doxing. Supervisor can work with HR to provide an account number for billing.
- If the harassment has a bias component, encourage the target/employee to file a Bias Incident Report using the University reporting tool.

### **Step 4: Identify a colleague/administrator who would assist the target with managing the following:**

- Removing information from public pages and directory.
- Setting up filters meant to divert and contain harassing messages.
- Managing the target's main inbox while it's being attacked.
- Providing an easy system for collecting, saving, documenting the harassment, if the targeted person wants that.
- Temporarily disable social media accounts.
- Offering information about available emotional support or counseling services (FSAP)
- Offering assistance in removing publicly-accessible personal information from unit website and LibGuides.
- Offering to inform colleagues within the unit about the harassment incident, and ask what details the staff member would like to share.
- Brainstorming with the employee if there are others outside of the immediate work group that should be notified, for example another CUL dept. or colleagues across campus.

## CORNELL RESOURCES FOR DEALING WITH HARASSMENT

The following resources may be useful to someone experiencing external harassment. The target should choose whether or not they want to reach out for support from any of the following resources.

### Library Communications and University Relations

If harassment is coming from public platforms, such as social media or traditional media, then the first point of administrative contact, beyond the subject's immediate supervisor, should be the lead communications officer within the Library. Those subject to harassment should never feel that they are alone in responding to false, misleading or harassing attacks in public forums. The lead communications officer in the Library can provide guidance on whether (and how) such issues should be responded to.

The lead Library communications officer serves as a conduit for University Relations and has a dual reporting relationship between Library leadership and University Relations. They are responsible for working with Library leadership and University Relations leadership to develop and execute both internal and external communications plans.

Many factors are taken into consideration when developing a communications plan in response to false, misleading or harassing attacks. A communications plan may include a statement issued by Library leadership to employees within the unit, with consent of the targeted individual (see [Threatening Communications and External Harassment Resources for Chairs, Deans and Directors](#)).<sup>3</sup> Communications plans may also include holding statements for response to media inquiries, or talking points for general responses to inquiries coming from other university stakeholders (students, staff, alumni or faculty). Whether an issue requires these kinds of communications rests with University Relations leadership in consultation with Library leadership, and designated communications officers.

NOTE: In instances where issues have not emerged as public controversies – for example, in less-publicized trolling attacks – public statements may attract additional attention from external actors who are looking for evidence that their activities are having an impact. Consequently, University Relations and the Library Communication Office often advise against the issuance of premature public statements, which may backfire on targeted individuals, thus making them a sustained target of harassment.

Talking points or public statements are vetted through the **University Relations Strategic Communications Office** (Stratcomm). This office is the main point of contact for all issues and crisis management communications at the University. They also oversee Cornell social media and flagship web properties. The Senior Director of Strategic Communications will either be the main point of contact for the Library communications officer, or will assign a staff member within Stratcomm to help manage the issue.

If the harassment originates from or has been covered through traditional media sources (newspapers, broadcast media, established online media, etc), or presents a risk of appearing in traditional media, then the Library communications officer and Stratcomm officer will engage the University's **Media Relations Office**. A media relations officer will then be assigned to handle incoming inquiries or any

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<sup>3</sup> Cornell University. "Threatening Communications and External Harassment – Resources for Chairs, Deans, and Directors," 2021. [https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/3/6798/files/2021/08/BIAS\\_Chairs\\_Deans\\_Directors\\_Revised.pdf](https://cpb-us-e1.wpmucdn.com/blogs.cornell.edu/dist/3/6798/files/2021/08/BIAS_Chairs_Deans_Directors_Revised.pdf)

outgoing communications to traditional media. Those subject to harassment, as well as frontline staff in any unit, do not need to respond to incoming media inquiries. Those inquiries can and should be forwarded to the designated media relations officer to handle.

Ongoing media training and reputation management training is recommended for all Library staff who may engage in public discourse. This kind of training, offered through the Library communications office in partnership with University Relations and the Media Relations Office, can help emerging public intellectuals navigate public spaces while maintaining their professional reputations and can lessen negative impacts when an issue arises.

[Library Communications](#) can be contacted [here](#).

### **Digital Harassment Self Defense**

The library's [Privacy Services](#) team can help with the following:

- Online reputation;
- How to protect your digital accounts from theft or abuse. How to use strong passwords, password managers, two-factor authentication, and related strategies;
- How to get your information removed from online data broker sites. (And when to consider paying for a service to do it for you.);
  - How to audit the information currently available about you online via your public presences past and current. How to make a safety plan for information you'll share in the future via institutional and personal web pages, email addresses and phone numbers, social media accounts, and other public engagement;
- Appoint someone to go through your email;
- Consider preserving evidence.

[CUL Privacy Services](#) can be emailed at [cul-privacy@cornell.edu](mailto:cul-privacy@cornell.edu).

### **Office of Faculty Development and Diversity (OFDD)**

The [Office of Faculty Development and Diversity](#) offers a range of services to support the well-being and success of all faculty and academics at Cornell. In incidents of harassment of librarians and archivists, the OFDD can serve as a triage point, checking with the librarian/archivist to see what they need. The supervisor, the target, or other functions within Cornell may notify the Office of the harassment of a librarian or archivist. The Office might ask 1) Does the individual feel safe? 2) Does the target need help to identify someone who would handle their mail and other communications? 3) Does the target want their identity suspended for some time on Cornell's website? OFDD connects academics with campus partners, such as the Cornell University Police Department, IT@Cornell, and with their college communication director.

[OFDD](#) can be reached at 607-255-6867 or email them at [ofdd@cornell.edu](mailto:ofdd@cornell.edu).

## **Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (FSAP)**

Harassment can lead to intense and painful emotions, abrupt changes in relationships, and a distressing sense of uncertainty. Harassment can also negatively affect job satisfaction or performance. During such times, [FSAP's](#) professional staff can provide guidance and support. Services offered at the FSAP include brief counseling as well as referrals to campus and community resources. These confidential services are offered to all benefits-eligible employees and their partners. The target may decide whether or not they want to pursue support from this program.

[FSAP](#) can be reached at 607-255-2673.

## **IT@Cornell**

The IT Security Office handles cases where a Cornellian is being harassed. They have a process to delete/disable a NetID from websites or delist email and can be done by contacting the [IT Service Desk](#) or [Identify Management](#) (IDM). Before they process the request, they work with the Title IX Office (coordinator or a deputy coordinator) to make the update. IDM will set a flag that will hide the target name and other attributes in the directory. The target may decide whether or not they want to pursue any IT related actions.

IT security can be reached at 607-255-5500 or visit the [support page](#).

## **Cornell University Police Department (CUPD) and Legal Actions**

### **CUPD**

The goal of the CUPD is to help to make people feel safe. Victims can choose a course of action which may include opening an informational report (which provides a police record of the incident) to investigating and prosecuting harassers. The targeted individual can choose to stop a process at any time or continue to pursue a different route of support from CUPD at any time during the process. The victim is in control and CUPD will help coordinate support based on the victim's wishes.

If you feel you are in immediate danger, call 911.

If the situation is not an incident in progress, you may want to download the safety app [Rave Guardian](#), which is offered for free to the Cornell community. This app provides a number of safety applications including texting with dispatch, resource numbers, and a safety timer (an app that allows you to set a location and when you should arrive. If you do not deactivate the timer, the system alerts campus safety).

CUPD can also help you preserve the messages received, including the header information (which must be gathered from the target's email account) and placed on a server for future use. This might be useful in case the victim chooses to pursue legal action.

### **Legal Actions**

If a target wishes to take legal action against their attacker, they should consider the following. In cases of online harassment, legal action must be taken where the email/social media harassment was viewed. Legal proceedings must be filed with the police department where the harassment was first viewed. CUPD can provide support to the appropriate police department.

If the harassers are located in another state, the FBI can be brought in, however, the U.S. attorney overseeing that office decides whether or not to pursue a case based on prosecutorial evidence and resources. If the attack is international in nature, Interpol may be involved. Legal action is likely to be cumbersome and expensive.<sup>4</sup>

The federal law that prohibits cyberstalking is [18 U.S.C. § 2261A\(2\)](#).

[CUPD](#) can be reached by phone at 607-255-1111.

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<sup>4</sup> American Bar Association. "Why addressing online harassment and discrimination is so difficult," May 2017. <https://www.americanbar.org/news/abanews/publications/youraba/2017/may-2017/why-addressing-online-harassment/>