

## Manpower Equal Opportunity - Resolving Conflicts

### RESOLVING CONFLICT



...Following the Light  
of Personal Behavior

NAVPERS 15620

It happened again today. One of your co-workers made a comment that just wasn't right. Maybe the co-worker didn't mean anything by it but the impact of those types of comments is beginning to disrupt your work. You've been thinking about it and wonder what you could do to resolve the situation without making a big incident of it. Or, maybe you are a co-worker or supervisor and someone has come to you for assistance in resolving a conflict in the workplace. Or, perhaps, someone has approached you regarding your behavior.

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two or more people that raises serious concerns and needs to be resolved. Many things can cause conflict such as opposing or differing views, perspectives from different backgrounds, differences in personality, lack of understanding, or miscommunication. When any of these happen, they may result in discrimination or harassment. Prejudice, stereotypes, bias, and other inappropriate behavior may result in conflict. When conflict is not resolved, it can escalate rapidly into serious problems. Each of us has a responsibility to resolve conflicts. One of the simplest and most effective methods is to use the **Informal Resolution System** outlined in this booklet.

The **Informal Resolution System** enables you to resolve conflicts in the workplace at the lowest possible level. This booklet will introduce you to the Informal Resolution System and provide you with the skills you'll need to use it. You will learn to determine if behavior falls in a red, yellow, or green zone. The booklet also emphasizes your individual responsibilities, identifies your role in the Informal Resolution System and provides you with options for reaching resolution.

Read this entire booklet and put the **Informal Resolution System** to work for you.

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When you become involved in a conflict it is helpful to ask yourself a set of standard questions. The answers to these questions should lead you to classify the behavior as RED (unacceptable), YELLOW (may be considered inappropriate) or GREEN (acceptable), and help you decide the course of action you can follow.

### Ask Yourself:

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person of a similar background?
- What are my responsibilities and options?

## Where can you get Advice?

- Shipmate/fellow Marine or co-worker
  - Chaplain
  - Supervisor
  - Legal Officer
  - Human Resource Director
  - Equal Opportunity Officer
  - Equal Employment Opportunity Office
  - DON Counseling and Advice Line 1-800-253-0931  
Overseas call collect 703-614-2735
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To help you determine whether behavior is unacceptable, think of a traffic light. Behavior can fall into three different zones, just like the red, yellow, and green of a traffic light. Determining whether a specific behavior is red, yellow, or green will help you decide what action, if any, you should take to reach resolution.



**Red means "Stop, don't do it!"** Red zone behavior is **ALWAYS UNACCEPTABLE** and includes asking for sexual favors in return for a good performance evaluation; making supervisory decisions because of a person's race or gender; and sending "hate" mail. The most severe forms of red zone behavior are clearly criminal, like rape and sexual assault.



**Yellow means "Use caution, prepare for red!"** Yellow zone behavior is **REGARDED AS INAPPROPRIATE BY MOST PEOPLE** and includes making racial, ethnic, or sexual comments or jokes; violating personal "space"; and touching someone in a sexually suggestive way. How yellow behavior is perceived depends on the situation and the individuals involved, as well as others who can see or hear them. Just as a traffic light changes from yellow to red, if this behavior is repeated, especially after being told it is not appropriate, it becomes red zone behavior and is definitely unacceptable.



**Green means "Go it's all right!"** Green zone behavior is **ACCEPTABLE** and includes counseling on performance or military appearance; normal social interaction; polite compliment; touching which could not reasonably be perceived in a sexual or threatening way; and friendly conversation.

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## Resolution Options

When a conflict occurs, there are three options in the Informal Resolution System that you can use to reach satisfactory resolution. Use as many options as you feel necessary.

### DIRECT APPROACH

- ***In person***, by approaching the individual(s) involved. First, give yourself time to collect your thoughts or cool down. Stay focuses on the behavior and its impact. Use comman courtesy and ensure your approach is not disrespectful. You may consider writing down your thoughts before approaching the individual(s) involved. (*The comments do not have to be given to the offending person but can be used as documentation if you have to resort to formal action.*)
- ***In writing***, by sending a letter to the offending person stating the facts, your feelings about the

behavior, and expected resolution.  
Writing:

- Will help collect thoughts and evidence
- Will help emotionally
- Will help choose and prepare for any option
- May be used to make the offending person stop the harassment
- May be used as documentation to prove the behavior was unwelcome

## INFORMAL THIRD PARTY

- **Request assistance from another person.** Ask another person to talk with the individuals involved, accompany you or intervene on your behalf to help resolve the conflict. This will normally be a friend or co-worker.

## TRAINING INFORMATION RESOURCES (TIR)

- **Request training or resource materials** for presentation to the workplace in the areas of discrimination, harassment or inappropriate behavior. Using these materials is a good method of communicating to the offending person and other individuals in the workplace, in a non-threatening way, the behavior is inappropriate.

**Training Information Resources** include videos, books, lesson plans, posters and other materials. Request a TIR from your unit TIR Coordinator (usually the EO/DEEOO) in writing or in person. You need not identify yourself. The CO or the unit commander decides if using the TIR is appropriate.

### Training Information Resource (TIR) Sample Request

- **Equal Opportunity/EEO Program Specialists**

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The Informal Resolution System identifies four roles. You may find yourself identifying with a different role depending on the circumstances.

**A**

I am the **RECIPIENT** who feels offended or harassed by someone's behavior.

**B**

I am the **OFFENDING PERSON** who may have offended or harassed another.

**C**

I am the **OTHER PERSON** who has been approached by the recipient, the offending person, or who has observed discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

**D**

I am the **SUPERVISOR** who has been approached by the recipient, offending person, other person or who has personally observed discrimination, harassment or other inappropriate behavior.

Regardless of your role in the conflict, keep in mind the following individual responsibilities:

- **I do not ignore conflict**
- **I review resolution options**
- **I take action to reach resolution**

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## Evaluate

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person?
- Was the behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?
- What are my responsibilities and options?

## Take Action

### If behavior is RED:

*Inform the chain of command of actions taken or needed.*

*Determine whether taking formal action is appropriate or whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.*

### If behavior is YELLOW:

*Approach the offending person directly to discuss the situation.*

*(Approach in a non-accusatory manner, in case behavior may have been misunderstood.)*

*Send a letter to the offending person stating the facts and my feelings about the matter.*

*Ask another person or supervisor to advise me , accompany me to the offending person, or intervene on my behalf.*

*Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.*

### If behavior is GREEN:

*No action is required.*

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## **B** IF I LEARN I HAVE HARASSED OR OFFENDED

- I do not ignore it.
- I listen to understand.
- I review my resolution options.
- I take action to reach a resolution.

## **B**



When I feel I may have harassed or offended ...

## Evaluate

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person?
- Was the behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?

- What are my responsibilities and options?

**Take Action**

## Take Action

If behavior is RED:

*Encourage recipient to use the formal complaint process or determine whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.*

*Inform the chain of command, if appropriate.*

*Refer all parties to support services.*

If behavior is YELLOW:

*Encourage directly approaching the offending person.*

*Suggest the recipient send a letter to the offending person.*

*Offer to intervene or accompany the recipient to the offending person, or supervisor.*

*Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.*

If behavior is GREEN:

*Advise recipient behavior is not inappropriate and explain why.*

**B to C**  **When approached by a person who feels he or she may have harassed or offended ...**

## Take Action

If behavior is RED:

*Advise offending person to stop behavior and seek legal counsel or assistance.*

*Inform the chain of command, if appropriate.*

*Refer all parties to support services.*

**If behavior is YELLOW:**

*Encourage offending person to stop behavior and apologize.*

*Offer to intervene or accompany the offending person to the recipient or supervisor.*

*Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.*

**If behavior is GREEN:**

*Advise offending person the behavior is acceptable and explain why.*

*Encourage the offending person to talk with the recipient and discuss the situation.*

**C**  **When I observe harassing or offending behavior ...**

## Take Action

### If behavior is RED:

*Stop behavior if possible.*

*Encourage recipient to use the formal complaint process if the Informal Resolution System cannot resolve the problem. Inform the chain of command, if appropriate.*

*Refer all parties to support services.*

### If behavior is YELLOW:

*Stop offending behavior if possible.*

*Offer to intervene or accompany the recipient to the offending person or supervisor.*

*Approach the offending person, indicate what I observed, recommend that the person apologize and correct behavior.*

*Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.*

### If behavior is GREEN:

*No action required.*

**D**

**IF I AM A SUPERVISOR WHO  
OBSERVED OR  
IS APPROACHED ABOUT  
HARASSMENT**

- I set the example.
- I do not ignore it.
- I listen and do not filter complaints.
- I intervene when necessary.
- I take or support action to reach a resolution.
- I take appropriate action.

## Evaluate

- What exactly happened?
- What was the impact of the behavior?
- Did it disrupt the work environment?
- Would it have offended a reasonable person?
- Was the behavior RED, YELLOW or GREEN?
- What are my responsibilities and options?

**A to  
D**



**When approached by a person who feels harassed or offended ...**

## Take Action

**If behavior is RED:**

*Take corrective action.*

*Encourage recipient to use the the formal complaint process or determine whether the Informal Resolution System can resolve the problem.*

*Inform the chain of command, if appropriate.*

*Refer all parties to support services.*

**If behavior is YELLOW:**

*Take corrective action.*

*Refer all parties to support services. Encourage directly approaching the offending person.*

*Offer to intervene or accompany the recipient to the offending person.*

*Ask for a Training Information Resource (TIR) for the workplace.*

*Follow-up to ensure resolution.*

**If behavior is GREEN:**

*Advise recipient behavior is acceptable and explain why.*

**B to D**



**When approached by a person who feels he or she may have harassed or offended ...**