

SPEAK UP TOOLKIT!

GETTING THE WORKING ENVIRONMENT RIGHT AT WFP



World Food
Programme

SAVING
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WHEN SHOULD YOU SPEAK UP?

Sometimes colleagues can behave inappropriately or even abusively in the office, online or at a social event. If you are affected by or if you witness inappropriate or abusive conduct, you are strongly encouraged to speak up as soon as possible.

But what is abusive conduct? Below are the different types of conduct which are not just inappropriate but depending on **how** they are delivered and the **frequency** can rise to the level of abusive conduct.

This [video](#) will give you more information about what is inappropriate and abusive conduct. You can also check the [Abusive Conduct Policy](#).

01. HARASSMENT

Unwelcome conduct that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation

Harassment is **particularly egregious** if based on a person's characteristic or traits (such as age, race, gender, nationality, etc.).

EXAMPLES:

- Use of unwelcome nicknames, gestures and physical contact
- Making it particularly difficult for another person to do their job by deliberately and improperly withholding essential information
- Making derogatory or demeaning comments or jokes about someone's gender, sexual orientation or race
- Shouting, swearing, displaying aggressive behaviour
- Unreasonably berating someone's work ("you're useless")
- Attempted or actual physical violence, such as hitting or throwing objects

02. ABUSE OF AUTHORITY

Improper use of a position of influence, power or authority against another person

Managers should manage performance in a **respectful and constructive** manner. This may result in critical comments on work performance as well as contentious decisions. While these can lead to conflict, **they are not by themselves considered abusive** unless they take the form of abusive conduct (e.g., performance concerns communicated in an offensive or humiliating manner).

EXAMPLES:

- Requesting that a supervisee provide a personal service not related to work, such as running errands of a personal nature for the supervisor
- Coercing a person not to report or raise concerns about potential breaches of standards of conduct or ethical obligations
- Manipulating the nature of a person's work in order to undermine them, such as by setting objectives with unreasonable or impossible deadlines
- Inconsistent management style where some individuals are unjustifiably and demonstrably favoured over others
- Arbitrarily demanding tasks to be undertaken outside of usual working hours or unjustifiably withholding or delaying leave approval

03. DISCRIMINATION

Unfair treatment or arbitrary distinction, based on a characteristic or trait

EXAMPLES:

- Denying professional development opportunities, transfers and promotions because of a person's race or ethnicity
- Not renewing the contract of an employee who is medically fit to perform their job because they have a disability
- Not hiring a woman who meets the qualifications required to perform the tasks for a position only because that position is traditionally or more frequently filled by a man, or vice versa

For actual examples of abusive conduct where the organization has taken action, you can check the latest [Annual Report on Practice in Disciplinary Matters](#).

Some of the examples above can be manifestations of retaliation under the [Whistleblower Protection Policy](#). In such instances, the [Ethics Office](#) is available to provide support.

WHAT IF IT IS SEXUAL HARASSMENT?

Sexual harassment undermines the dignity of those who experience it, affects their ability to work effectively and poisons work environments. Employees found to have engaged in sexual harassment can be removed from the organization and even be banned from any future UN employment.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

Unwelcome conduct of a sexual nature that might reasonably be expected or be perceived to cause offense or humiliation

Sexual harassment is the manifestation of a culture of discrimination and privilege based on unequal gender relations and other power dynamics

- It can take many forms – it can be physical, verbal or visual.
- It can be perpetrated by **any person**, including a supervisor, a peer or a subordinate, and individuals of any gender can be on either side of the conduct.
- It does **not** have to be intentional.
- Prior relationships or use of alcohol do **not** lessen the seriousness of the conduct.
- It usually involves repeated behaviour, but **once** can be enough.
- The fact that no one saw it happening should **not** stop people from speaking up.
- Traumatic events, including sexual harassment, can affect recollection and therefore documenting the incident, as soon as possible, may help later on.

EXAMPLES:

- Sending sexually suggestive communications, such as hard copy or electronic text messages (by email, instant messaging, social media, etc.), images, audio recordings or videos
- Telling sexual anecdotes or jokes or asking questions about sexual preferences or habits
- Making sexual comments about appearance, clothing or body parts
- Asking a person for unwelcome dates repeatedly or asking for sex
- Making inappropriate sexual gestures or staring
- Touching, including kissing, fondling, pinching, patting, rubbing, or purposefully brushing up against another person or touching oneself sexually for others to view
- Rape and any other forms of attempted or actual sexual assault

Are intimate relationships at the office allowed?

Relationships and sexual harassment should not be confused. The first is a two-way consensual connection. The second is unwelcome by the receiving person and hurtful.

However, even when consensual, such relationships between WFP employees may not be appropriate and may need to be disclosed to the [Ethics Office](#).

Some examples are situations when one employee takes or reviews administrative decisions concerning the other or one is a direct subordinate in reporting/line of authority to the other.

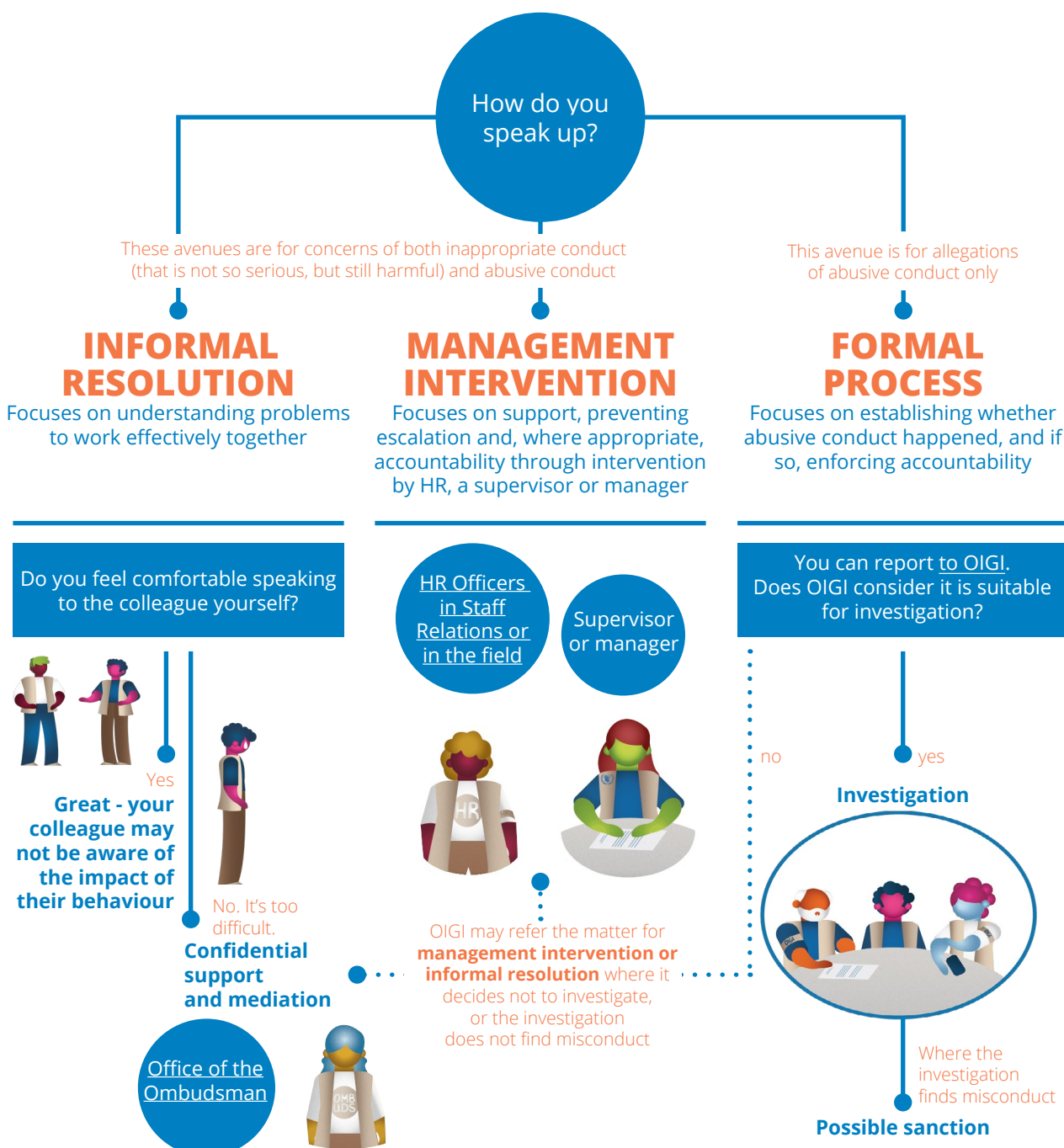


If you require immediate assistance, please contact your local authorities, [WFP Security](#), UNDSS, or for WFP employees, the 24/7 Crisis Hotline on **+39 06 6513 3333** (VSAT 1301-3333)

HOW DO YOU SPEAK UP? THERE ARE THREE AVENUES

You feel that your colleague may be behaving inappropriately or even abusively. It may be affecting you or someone else in the team. **How do you speak up?**

This [video](#) and the flow chart below will give you more information on the three avenues for speaking up when a problem arises. No matter how you speak up, measures can be taken to protect and support you. Check also the rest of the toolkit for tips on how to speak up.



Additional support and information:

- [Staff Counselling Service](#)
- [Ethics Office \(also for matters related to retaliation under the Whistleblower Protection Policy\)](#)
- [Respectful Workplace Adviser \(RWA\)](#)
- [Medical Service](#)
- [Security officer](#)
- [Representative of the Professional Staff Association \(PSA\) or the FAO/WFP Union of General Service Staff \(UGSS\).](#)

HOW DO YOU SPEAK UP? WHO DOES WHAT?

MANAGEMENT INTERVENTION

WHO? MANAGER/HR OFFICERS

What can they do?

They can help the colleague change their behaviour by:

- Managers: actively supervising the colleague through performance management.
- Managers/HR Officers: cautioning the colleague by reminding them of what conduct is expected at WFP.
- For more information check the page [“You are a manager”](#)

FORMAL PROCESS

WHO? OFFICE OF INSPECTIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS (OIGI)

What can they do?

Once OIGI have assessed that a matter is suitable for investigation, it will conduct fact finding. This includes gathering evidence and interviewing individuals.

Will I be kept informed?

Affected persons and the actor will be informed of the outcome of an investigation and any sanctioning.

INFORMAL RESOLUTION

WHO? OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN (OBD)

What can they do?

- In a confidential conversation support the colleague by developing effective resolution strategies for the issue that they are facing.
- With the consent of the affected person, coordinate a response with HR and managers.
- Mediate or lead a facilitated conversation between the concerned parties with their agreement.

What happens next?

If the investigation finds that the behaviour is abusive, the relevant decision maker will be informed and can impose sanctions. The investigation and sanctions alone may not resolve a situation or difficult relations in the workplace.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE?

What type of conduct can you report for possible investigation?

Formal process: only allegations of abusive conduct can be investigated. Where OIGI considers that these allegations do not warrant an investigation, they may be referred to [Staff Relations](#) or the [Office of the Ombudsman](#). Page 4 of [“How the WFP Investigation Process Works”](#) explains other reasons why OIGI may decide to not investigate.

Informal Resolution/Management Intervention: is encouraged even where the conduct may not be so serious to rise to abusive conduct but is inappropriate and is not what WFP expects of colleagues.

Why do investigations take more time than the other avenues?

This is because the consequences can be serious and lead to someone losing their job or being demoted. Therefore thorough fact finding and due process must take place to ensure that any decision is fair, appropriate and the actor is given an opportunity to present their account of events.

No matter how you speak up, measures can be taken to protect and support you (e.g., changing reporting lines or working arrangements)

SOMEONE'S BEHAVIOUR IS AFFECTING YOU: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

If someone behaves inappropriately or abusively towards you, you can follow the **practical steps** below:

DOCUMENT THE INCIDENT

This will help you remember what exactly happened when you speak up

How?

Take notes as soon as possible of all the comments, attitudes or interactions that made you feel uncomfortable, including where and when they occurred and how that impacted you.

Keep relevant supporting documentation like emails and messages.

Write down the names of people who may have seen the incident or you spoke to just after.

Don't be discouraged from speaking up if there were no eyewitnesses -- this is common in cases of abusive conduct and other types of evidence can be considered.

SEEK SUPPORT

This will help you understand the extent of the problem and the impact on you

How?

When you are on the receiving end of inappropriate or abusive conduct, it can be distressing, upsetting and impact your work and personal life, so talk to someone about the incident.

It can be a friend, a family member or a support resource, such as the [Staff Counsellors](#) for free and confidential psychosocial support.

PREPARE TO SPEAK UP

Once you have chosen how you will speak up, you should prepare for it

How?

Understand the avenue you chose to speak up and be clear on what happens next.

Pick the right time and place: it is usually difficult to discuss important matters when emotions are high.

Identify the issue: be concise, refer to specific examples or allegations.

Explain the impact on you.

The [Office of the Ombudsman](#) can help you prepare for this conversation. Check out some [tips](#) on managing difficult conversations.

SPEAK UP

The situation will not change or improve if you remain silent

How?

Check the page "[How do you speak up?](#)" for information on the avenues to speak up.

No matter how you speak up, measures may be taken to protect you (e.g., changing reporting lines or working arrangements).

YOU ARE AWARE OF A PROBLEM: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

It is your role to demonstrate respect and ensure that you do not condone inappropriate or abusive conduct.

DO SOMETHING

You may be fearful of taking action or influenced by the inaction of others. This is called “the bystander effect”. Consider taking the relevant e-module on this topic: [“How can I become an active bystander? Speak up against abusive conduct”](#).

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

When we do nothing, we contribute to a toxic culture, which has a negative effect on colleagues’ mental health, wellbeing and productivity. It is important that we respond to inappropriate and abusive conduct.

YOU SEE OR HEAR ABOUT A PROBLEM - WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

Depending on the situation and your level of comfort, there are different ways to ensure that you do not condone an unacceptable behavior, so you may follow the steps below:

DISTRACT

If you think it is too early to speak up

How?

Make your point by redirecting the actor away from the situation. It can be as simple as changing the topic or asking a question when someone is behaving inappropriately.

LISTEN UP

If someone is telling you about their problem or you want to check in with the affected person

How?

Listen constructively to the affected person, show them empathy rather than sympathy (“I understand that is how you feel” rather than “I agree with you”). Do not offer personal opinions or speculate on facts. Maintain confidentiality. Don’t gossip. Help them think about what they should do next – explain the avenues to speak up.

SPEAK UP

If you see or hear something that doesn’t feel appropriate

How?

Check the page [“How do you Speak Up?”](#) for information on the avenues to speak up.

If you are a manager, you also have a role in resolving the matter: check the page [“You are a manager”](#) for further guidance.

YOU ARE A MANAGER: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

It is your role to provide protected, respectful and inclusive work environments for your team.
But how do you do that?

PREVENT

Lead by example

How?

Be self-aware. Before acting, think about the potential impact of your words or actions. Complete the mandatory training on Abusive Conduct.

Ensure that supervisees are treated in a fair, respectful and inclusive manner and understand their role in creating respect and inclusion

How?

Ensure that your supervisees complete the Mandatory Training. Ensure that supervisees participate in awareness raising initiatives, such as **Speak Up! sessions**.

Encourage supervisees to speak up by ensuring psychological safety in your team

How?

Complete the additional mandatory training "**How can I promote a respectful and inclusive workplace for my team? Embracing Psychological Safety**". Regularly check in with team members, and actively monitor for signs of inappropriate or abusive conduct, such as reduced productivity, faster than usual employee turnover, increase in requests for sick leave and changes in behaviour.

RESPOND

Promptly and fairly respond to inappropriate or abusive conduct

How?

If you are aware of inappropriate or abusive conduct because you are monitoring the office or it has been brought to your attention, you should treat the matter discreetly and as a priority.

Then what should you do?

You should schedule a meeting with the affected person as soon as possible. Refresh your memory on [the Abusive Conduct Policy](#) and take the steps below, as appropriate. Where possible document the steps taken.

1. LISTEN:

Listen constructively. Do not offer personal opinions or speculate on the facts (do not take sides). Show them empathy rather than sympathy ("I understand that is how you feel" rather than "I agree with you").

2. SUPPORT:

Inform the affected person of the available support, including the [Staff Counsellors](#) and refer them to this guidance material.

Initiate protective measures, such as physically separating the actor and affected person; assigning alternative duties; altering reporting lines; leave and flexible working arrangements.

3. ADDRESS:

Caution the colleague about the nature of the possible conduct and remind them of what conduct is expected at WFP.

Help the colleague change their behaviour through active supervision such as performance management. This could include several discussions throughout the year, completing an [e-module](#) to help create self-awareness or coaching.

4. MONITOR:

Follow-up with the affected and/or witnessing persons. Inform any successor about ongoing matters, actions taken and issues of which to be mindful in your team.

In all the above steps, you may seek guidance and advice from [HR Officers in Staff Relations or in the field](#). The [Office of the Ombudsman](#) can also be asked to facilitate a discussion between the colleagues.

SOMEONE HAS SPOKEN UP ABOUT YOU: WHAT SHOULD YOU DO?

What should you do if someone is telling you that your conduct has been problematic?

It is easy to feel defensive but instead you should listen up and take the allegations seriously. Here are some ways to help you do this:

Take the e-module [“What should I do if someone has spoken up about me? Changing my behaviour through self-awareness”](#).

Follow the steps below:

REFLECT

Think about your behaviour

How?

Identify a few actions that you regret doing or that you wish you had done differently in the past year.

Reflect on the triggers or reasons behind your behaviour.

Acknowledge your behaviour – focus on your concrete actions rather than personal characteristics.

Think about desired behaviour – what would you like to do differently next time?

LISTEN TO FEEDBACK

Be open to understanding the perspectives of other people

How?

Thank them for coming to you, respond with empathy.

Explain yourself by showing vulnerability. Discuss how they can help you so that the behaviour doesn't happen again.

Discuss how you will act on the feedback.

BE PROACTIVE

At WFP, you are assessed not just on what you achieve but how you achieve it

How?

Create specific performance goals (vs. unachievable and vague). Check your progress with your manager or supervisor.

Plan when and how you will act.

Develop a growth mindset by noticing progress and believing that you can achieve more.

SEEK SUPPORT

You may seek advice and guidance from different WFP functions

How?

[Staff Counselling Service](#)

[Office of the Ombudsman](#)

[HR Officers in Staff Relations or in the field](#)

COOPERATE

Cooperate fully with any informal resolution, management intervention or formal process

How?

Fully respect the confidentiality of the matter.

Do not engage with the affected person unless they request it.

Do not engage in reprisals or retaliatory behavior against the affected person or witnesses.

Identify any witnesses and documentation that may support the facts in your version of what occurred.