

# BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM



**BENTLEY**  
UNIVERSITY

The Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) ensures students affected by bias or a bias-related incident have access to appropriate resources and assists the university in its response to situations that may impact the overall campus climate around diversity and inclusion.

## WHAT IS A BIAS INCIDENT?

A bias incident is characterized as a behavior or act (verbal, written or physical) which is personally directed against or targets an individual or group based on perceived or actual characteristics such as race, color, religious belief, sex, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national or ethnic origin, disability, veteran status, or age.

### Examples of behavior or acts that may constitute a bias incident:

- Threatening phone calls, mail/email, social media reports
- Jokes based on stereotypes
- Excluding or barring participation from university sponsored clubs or events based on ones' perceived identity
- Using a racial, ethnic, homophobic, gender or other slur to identify someone
- Graffiti or other vandalism
- Harassment based on identity
- Physical assault

## SCOPE OF THE BIRT

BIRT has no authority to discipline any student or member of the faculty or staff. Bias incidents that violate Bentley University policy or Massachusetts State Law will be referred to and addressed through the university's student conduct process and/or the criminal courts. Bias incidents that violate the standards outlined in Bentley's Employment Policies and Practices will be referred to Human Resources or the Provost's Office. Bias incidents that violate neither the law nor university policy will be addressed by an educational response that may include conflict resolution, coordinated by BIRT.

## THE BIAS INCIDENT RESPONSE TEAM'S ROLE

The Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) is responsible for dealing with student-reported bias incidents. Working closely with appropriate administrators, students, faculty, committees, organizations and offices, BIRT plays an educational role in both fostering an inclusive campus climate and supporting targeted individuals when bias and/or hate incidents occur. The team has broad membership in order to support and affirm Bentley's educational mission and to support our vision to create an institution in which people do not experience barriers because of aspects of their identity.



# TEAM ORGANIZATION

## TEAM MEMBERSHIP

BIRT is composed of representatives from various departments at Bentley. The team reviews and responds to reported bias-related incidents in an educational and non-confrontational manner. The group comprises a core team and an ad-hoc team. It is important that decisions regarding team membership are strategic; we seek to identify individuals across campus whose job responsibilities relate to incident/behavioral response and/or who work with protected groups in reference to the Bentley University non-discrimination policy. This makes them a logical point of contact for informal reporting.

## CORE TEAM

The core team consists of six staff members who will evaluate incoming reports from students, faculty, and/or staff and provide guidance on next steps. Guidance will be based on the type of incident and will include additional conversations with a member(s) of the adhoc team based on the nature of the incident presented.

## ADHOC TEAM

The adhoc team consists of members from across the university whose functional areas include protected groups on campus. These team members will be included in ongoing and consistent conversations on the overall campus climate. Members will also be present for specific follow-up based on the nature of the incident.

## TEAM FUNCTIONS AND AUTHORITY

BIRT has three primary responsibilities:

- Evaluate and respond to immediate needs of the reporting party
- Act as a referral resource, directing reporters to appropriate campus units for further action
- Assist in and consult on the development of community level response to the incident (residence hall emails, university emails, educational sanctioning)

Source: Education Advisory Board brief "Establishing an Effective Bias Response Team" (April 2011)

## CORE TEAM

### Department/Office

### Role

#### Multicultural Center

Co-chair BIRT connection with student of color population, diversity training and education

#### Residential Center

Co-chair BIRT, residential student population connection and education, diversity training and education

#### Human Resources

Liaison for staff-related incidents

#### Faculty Representative (2)

Connections to the academic mission and classroom interactions, liaisons to academic leadership

#### Diversity and Inclusion

Connection to the overall diversity mission of the institution liaison to Ombudsman, diversity training and education (campus-wide)

# WHAT TO DO IF YOU'VE EXPERIENCED BIAS ON CAMPUS

## REPORTING PROCESS



## You can file a report to BIRT using one of these methods:



Report to RA, staff/faculty member, or BIRT member



Online system  
[bentley.edu/birt](http://bentley.edu/birt)



If your report of a fellow student or a faculty/staff member involves criminal activity, it will be handled by **University Police**.



If your report of bias reveals a potential violation of our Title IX policy, it will be handled by Bentley's **Title IX Coordinator**.



If your report of bias involves a faculty or staff member as the perpetrator, it will be handled by **Human Resources**.



## STATEMENT ON SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

The Bentley University Bias Incident Response Protocol shall be interpreted and implemented in a manner consistent with Bentley's commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression. Hate speech and actions are not tolerated by the university and are contrary to the university's policies of harassment based on bigotry or bias. The expression of an idea or point of view some may find offensive or charged is not necessarily a bias-related incident. Bentley values freedom of expression and the open exchange of ideas. The expression of controversial ideas and differing views is a vital part of campus discourse. While this value of openness protects controversial ideas, it does not protect harassment or expressions of bias or hate aimed at individuals or groups that violate university policies.

## MASSACHUSETTS STATE LAW: HATE CRIMES

Acts constituting hate crimes, as defined by Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 22C, Section 32, include "any criminal act coupled with overt actions motivated by bigotry and bias including, but not limited to, a threatened, attempted or completed overt act motivated at least in part by racial, religious, ethnic, handicap, gender or sexual orientation prejudice, or which otherwise deprives another person of his constitutional rights by threats, intimidation or coercion, or which seek to interfere with or disrupt a person's exercise of constitutional rights through harassment or intimidation."

Chapter 265 Crimes Against the Person – Section 39 states in relevant part that it is illegal to commit a crime against one's person or property with the intent to intimidate such person because of such person's race, color, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or disability.

## BENTLEY NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Bentley University does not discriminate in admission or access to or treatment or employment in any of its educational programs or activities, including scholarships, loans and athletics, on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and/or expression, marital status, age, national origin, citizenship status, disability, genetic information, military or veteran status. Bentley University maintains and supports affirmative action plans for its workplace in compliance with federal law. Equal opportunity extends to all aspects of the employment relationship, including hiring, promotions, training, working conditions, compensation and benefits. Bentley University's policies and practices reflect the university's commitment to nondiscrimination in all areas of employment. The university complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and Revenue Procedure 75-50 prohibiting such discrimination. Anyone believing that he or she has experienced adverse treatment may register a complaint with Earl Avery, special assistant to the president, at 781.891.2907.

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**MAIL** Bentley University, 175 Forest Street  
Waltham, Massachusetts 02452  
**WEB** [bentley.edu](http://bentley.edu)  
**PHONE** +1 781.891.2000



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