

Diversity & Sensitivity Employee Reference Guide

Practicing workplace etiquette is essential to developing and maintaining a healthy workplace. It also has the added benefit of being a shortcut to inclusion! If employees take the time to show common courtesy to co-workers, their experience in the workplace will be more pleasant, and all employees will feel included and welcomed.

Best Practices for Employees

- Respect others' opinions
- Acknowledge cultural & generational differences and historical injustices without becoming defensive
- Be open to learning about other cultures and ideas
- Give others the benefit of the doubt in a dispute
- Seek first to understand, then to be understood
- Do not stereotype
- Do not judge others by your own cultural standards
- Refrain from using derogatory terms
- Give and seek feedback; receive feedback without getting defensive

Punctuality: Tardiness and absence implies that your job is low on your priorities list, whether you are a new employee or a long-term employee. If your co-workers rely on you to start or finish tasks, or if they work the shift after you, your punctuality can impact their ability to do their jobs, remain productive, or go home.

Professionalism: Whether your company has a dress code or not, remember to dress appropriately. In addition to keeping yourself looking professional, remember it is equally important to keep your work area clean and uncluttered.

Be true to your word: Your word is a personal guarantee that you should only give when you intend to follow through. Sometimes you only get one opportunity to prove that you are a trustworthy employee.

Own your mistakes: Everybody falls short at times, and the best way to handle this is to be honest and upfront. Own your mistakes by being apologetic instead of making excuses.

Avoid gossip: Gossiping about others is extremely unprofessional and reflects poorly on you. Limit your comments about co-workers to positive ones only.

Be polite:

- People will notice if you consistently treat them with respect and kindness
- Saying “*please*” and “*thank you*” go a long way
- Try to avoid interrupting others during conversations

Ask before borrowing:

- A co-worker’s work area is their personal space
- Even if you are on good terms with your co-worker, they will not appreciate it when they start to notice that things are missing from their work area without their consent

Be respectful:

- Use common sense in your interactions and do not say anything that may be taken offensively
- Even if swearing and inappropriate language is used freely in your personal life, you never know who you might be making uncomfortable by bringing it into the workplace

Avoid the following at work:

- Swearing or inappropriate language
- Inappropriate jokes
- Racial remarks
- Sexual comments
- Comments on religion

Practice the following at work:

- Learn about the cultural backgrounds, lives, and interests of co-workers. Building relationships through increased understanding and trust helps to nurture inclusion. “Personal Connections” are the most-often cited example of inclusion.
- Learn about one another's cultures by sharing food
- Be aware of one another’s culturally significant events and holidays
- Don’t make assumptions about co-workers
- Be open minded
- Recognize cultural differences that impact how people work and interact with each other:
 - Physical contact and personal space – In some cultures, individuals are less inhibited about engaging in physical contact. In others, individuals are expected to behave modestly.
 - Styles and patterns of communication – Some cultures are more accepting of silence during conversation whereas in other cultures, individuals prefer continuous conversation and “small talk.”

The information provided in the “Diversity & Sensitivity Employee Reference Guide” is for informational purposes and to serve as a guide only, not for the purpose of providing legal advice, and should not be relied upon as legal advice. You should contact your human resources or legal representative to obtain advice with respect to any particular issue.