



INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## Teacher Learner Advocacy Committee (TLAC)

TLAC's mission is to foster and ensure a professional learning environment by assisting in conflict resolution and sponsoring programs to enhance communication and professionalism in all learning environments

**Even great institutions have challenges and occasional lapses in professionalism. Indiana University School of Medicine is always searching for new ideas to improve our learning environment and cultivate professionalism.**

**Unsure how to resolve or address a conflict?**

**Unsure if you have a voice or need an advocate?**

**Do you have ideas for improving our learning environment, communication or professionalism?**

**Please contact TLAC. We can help.**

*Email the TLAC at [TLAC@iupui.edu](mailto:TLAC@iupui.edu)*

*<http://msa.iusm.iu.edu/tlaccommittee.htm>*

### **Information and Expectation**

Indiana University School of Medicine is committed to maintaining an academic and clinical environment in which faculty, fellows, residents, students, and employees can work together to further education and research and provide the highest level of patient care, whether in the classroom, the laboratory or the clinics. The School's goal is to train men and women to meet the highest standards of professionalism and work in an environment where effective,

ethical and compassionate patient care is both expected and provided. All interactions, whether student-student, student-teacher, or teacher-teacher, should demonstrate mutual respect. This can be expressed in many ways, but all interactions shall include collegiality, honesty, fairness, and equal treatment.

Unprofessional behavior, abuse, harassment, or discrimination as defined by the IUSM Core Values and Guiding Principles, will not be tolerated at IUSM.

### **What is Unacceptable Behavior?**

- *Certain behaviors are inherently destructive to any educational and professional relationship. Behaviors such as violence, sexual harassment or inappropriate discrimination based on personal characteristics will never be tolerated.*
- *Behavior can also be inappropriate if the effect interferes with professional development. Behavior patterns such as making demeaning or derogatory remarks, belittling comments or destructive criticism fall into this category.*
- *Abuse may be defined as any behavior that is recognized by members of the academic community or by the larger society as exploitive or punitive.*

### **Examples of inappropriate behaviors include:**

- *Abusive, disrespectful, degrading, or unprofessional communication. This includes verbal, nonverbal and written communications*
- *Assigning tasks or grading as forms of punishment rather than to evaluate objective performances*
- *Episodes of psychological punishment by an individual in a position of authority (e.g., public humiliation, threat and intimidation, or removal of privileges)*
- *Discrimination based on race, religion, ethnicity, sex, age, sexual orientation and physical disabilities*
- *Physical punishment or physical threats; sexual harassment;*
- *Requiring the performance of personal services, and/or intentional neglect or intentional lack of communication*

**If something has made you feel uncomfortable or vulnerable it may be a matter for TLAC to explore.**

### **What is Abuse?**

To abuse is to treat in a harmful, injurious, or offensive way; to attack in words; to speak insultingly, harshly, and unjustly to or about a person; and to revile by name calling or speaking unkindly to an individual in a contentious manner. Abuse is further defined to be particularly unnecessary or avoidable acts or works of a negative nature inflicted by one person on another person or persons.

### **What is Harassment?**

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that creates an intimidating, hostile work, or learning environment in which submission to such conduct is a condition of one's professional training or employment.

### **What is Discrimination?**

Discrimination is prejudicial or preferential treatment or consideration based on some categorization or classification and not on merit. Discrimination may manifest in behaviors, policies, or actions that are influenced by partiality or prejudice. It may adversely affect one's work, because of disparate treatment, disparate impact, or the creation of a hostile or intimidating work or learning environment.

### **What to do when conflicts occur in the learning environment?**

When a conflict arises, the parties directly involved should try to resolve the matter informally. Methods to resolve the issue informally may include: direct discussion between parties, involvement of course/clerkship/residency directors, department chairs, or the Office of Medical Student Affairs.

If this approach is unsuccessful, a more structured process is available through the TLAC. TLAC members are aware that individuals may be apprehensive reporting a conflict for fear of retaliation. The conflict resolution process is designed to be confidential, impartial, effective, and to help avoid retaliation of any kind. *Retaliation or the appearance thereof will not be tolerated.*

### **Who serves on the Teacher-Learner Advocacy Committee?**

The TLAC members include students (medical and graduate), residents, fellows, and faculty members of the IUSM educational community appointed to act as advocates in fostering a fair and professional learning environment. The Executive Associate Dean for Faculty Affairs & Professional Development (EADFAPD) appoints the chairperson of the TLAC and the committee members. Every attempt is made to have a broad-based and diverse membership.

### **Who Can Use The Committee?**

Any individual in the IUSM community, including all students, housestaff, fellows, or faculty may use the committee. Anyone with issues concerning professionalism or any behavior, policy, or action that is harmful to the learning environment at IUSM should contact a committee member to discuss her/his concern. Following an initial review, the complaint may be forwarded to a different committee if necessary.

### **How Do I Contact A Committee Member?**

You may contact any committee member by phone, appointment or email. Names and contact numbers of the members are included in this brochure and can be found at <http://msa.iusm.iu.edu/tlaccommittee.htm>.

You may also email the committee directly at [TLAC@iupui.edu](mailto:TLAC@iupui.edu).

### **How are Complaints Handled?**

The TLAC strives to handle issues quickly, confidentially and comprehensively. The process proceeds as described below:

- Contact a member of the TLAC directly or at [TLAC@iupui.edu](mailto:TLAC@iupui.edu) and discuss the concern
- Provide a written description of the complaint and request for TLAC to explore the issue

- TLAC Chairperson assigns a rapid response team consisting of faculty, residents and students to the complaint.
- The rapid response team will make every effort to respond within 48 hours.
- The response team confidentially meets with the individual who raised the concern first and then with other parties related to the issue as necessary.
- The response team then meets and organizes their ideas to address the specific issue raised, systemic school-wide implications and possible methods of resolution or improvement.
- The response team reports back to the entire TLAC in a confidential manner, names and departments involved can usually be kept anonymous.
- A summary and response is submitted to the Chairperson and EADFAPD.
  
- The EADFAPD decides on an action to take with recommendations from the TLAC as well as other IUSM leaders.
- The EADFAPD or his/her designee will discuss a resolution with all involved parties.
- **TLAC strives to maintain confidentiality and to keep all parties informed during the entire process.**