

Patient/visitor discriminatory behavior

# Key responses

UW Health is committed to creating belonging for everyone.

- Staff receiving discriminatory behavior may leave to seek assistance at any time if clinically appropriate.
- Staff witnessing or being made aware of discriminatory behavior should respond using this tool.

**Bigotry:** When a person who is intolerantly devoted to their own opinions and prejudices, regards or treats the members of a group (such as a racial or ethnic group) with hatred and intolerance. (*Merriam-Webster*)

**Microaggressions:** Microaggressions are more than just insults, insensitive comments or generalized rude behavior. They are something very specific—the kinds of remarks, questions or actions that are painful because they have to do with a person's membership in a group that's discriminated against or subject to stereotypes. They are the everyday slights, indignities, put downs and insults that those who have experienced historical injustices experience in their day to day interactions with others.

**UWHealth**

Threatening, disruptive, extremely bigoted language  
OR continued bigoted comments

Response: Leave and seek assistance.

Direct bigoted comment OR continued  
bigoted comments

Response: UW Health does not tolerate bigotry.  
Being a patient at UW Health means treating people respectfully. Let's refocus on how I can help you today.

**Macroaggression:**

"I don't like xxx people touching me."

Response: My role is to take the very best care  
of you. We are here to help you as a team.  
We do not change (doctors, nurses, etc.) because of  
their (race, ethnicity, religion, etc.).

**Microaggression:**

"What country are you from?" or "Your accent is xxx."

Response: UW Health is committed to  
creating belonging for everyone.

# Interrupting microaggressions

## I committed a microaggression

### Respond in the moment

- Listen
- Acknowledge you have work to do and believe the person
- Accept that perception is reality
- Don't get defensive; never get stuck on your intention — it doesn't matter
- Accept responsibility
- Apologize and make a commitment to the person who was harmed
- Offer to make amends
- It should never be the responsibility of the person harmed to educate someone. If they have taken the time to do so, make sure you express gratitude for doing so.

### Follow up

- Educate yourself; learn why your action was a microaggression
- Write a letter of apology
- Learn the lesson
- Be open to feedback
- Take concrete actions to address harm
- Share what you learned

## I witnessed or was told about a microaggression

### Respond in the moment

- Ask a question (*What are your concerns? or What do you mean by that?*)
- State your own values that counteract the offensive behavior (*I would fully trust this colleague to care for my own family member.*)
- Speak to shared values (*At UW Health we are committed to creating belonging for everyone.*)
- Appeal to local policies (*At UW Health we expect respect towards all our physicians and staff.*)
- Publicly support the aggrieved party
- If somebody else stands up, second and support them

### Follow up

- Talk privately with the person who committed it
- Report the act to a person in position of authority
- Submit a HERO workforce safety report
- Reaffirm your support of the aggrieved party
- Start a group dialogue
- Use incidents to teach tolerance
- Advocate for resources and training
- Set limits for the future (*Please don't tell discriminatory jokes in my presence.*)

## I received a microaggression

### Respond in the moment

- Leave the space
- Speak up (*I deserve to be treated with respect.*)
- Don't speak up if it is not safe to do so and/or if you do not feel like educating people
- Ask a question (*Why would you think that?*)
- Rely on your allies for support
- Deflect defensiveness by acknowledging that we all have stereotypes. (*I know we all have stereotypes, but I clearly am xxx.*)

### Follow up

- Report the act to a person in position of authority
- Submit a HERO workforce safety report
- Seek out a community of support such as a UW Health employee resource group