



Background: Valencia College encourages employees to express differences of opinion in a professional manner thus promoting a productive and inclusive working environment. As a result, workplace disputes may occur. Valencia's dispute resolution policy encourages clear and collegial communication to promptly resolve disputes. Interpersonal discussion is an informal, effective dispute resolution method of resolving such disputes. This method encourages the healthy and respectful exchange of ideas.

Definition: Interpersonal discussion is an informal approach of addressing employees' disagreements and differences directly with the individual with whom the conflict is occurring. This process entails parties involved having one-on-one meaningful conversations in which both parties can reach a mutual understanding and resolution.

GUIDELINES FOR CONSTRUCTIVE CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

- Clearly define and agree to purpose of the conversation.
- Make a distinction between the problem and the person.
- Be clear, straightforward and concrete in your communication.
- Listen to understand and clarify when necessary.
- Avoid triggering the defensiveness of your counterpart by blaming, accusing, criticizing and/or diagnosing.
- Thoughtfully reflect on what was said before responding.
- Embrace others' perspectives, thank others for sharing their viewpoints and then share your own.
- Close conversation by agreeing on established expectations for moving forward.

GUIDELINES FOR INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

Involved parties will:

- Select a mutually agreeable time (allow time for heightened emotions to subside, but try to avoid significant communication gaps).
- Meet at a place that is neutral for both parties.
- Describe the concern in clear terms to include relevant behaviors, feelings and desired changes.
- Summarize the concern based on what each person has heard.
- Brainstorm to find solutions then offer them to all parties involved.
- Discuss all options in a positive and objective manner then rule out those all agree are unworkable.
- Assign further analysis of each option to a participant.
- Obtain commitments on next steps.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL INTERPERSONAL DISCUSSIONS

- Work to resolve conflicts in a respectful manner.
- Be clear and truthful about what is really bothering you and what the desired change is.
- Be willing to take responsibility for your own behavior and to compromise when necessary.
- Abstain from voicing negative opinions about others.
- Clearly state what you feel and want and invite your counterpart to help in finding solutions.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

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