

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR GUIDE

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

Ivy Tech Community College students decide for a variety of reasons to continue their education. When they do, they should be making the decision to devote the necessary time and intellectual energy to ensure success in this developmental environment. The lessons learned at Ivy Tech will help ensure that one can face and overcome future challenges to be an integral part of today's society.

All members of the college community should strive to uphold the standards of the College. Specifically, the foundational ideas of integrity, mutual respect, inquiry, citizenship, and development should be at the forefront of all discussions, interactions and behaviors that occur in and outside the classroom. Our faculty and staff support and guide students, but the primary responsibility in achieving success lies with the student.

Instructors, staff, and students all have a right to an educational environment that is supportive of the learning process. It is the responsibility of instructors and staff to create and maintain this environment. It is the responsibility of the student to act in a manner appropriate for the classroom and adhere to behavioral standards and expectations during all college experiences. Together the college experience can be one of the learning and growth.

This guide is designed to provide faculty and staff at Ivy Tech Community College with sound principles for dealing with disruptive behavior, whether occurring in the classroom or elsewhere in the college environment.

WHAT IS DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR?

Disruptive behavior may best be defined as any of the following:

- Actions that inhibits a faculty member's ability to conduct class or limit other student's ability to benefit from instruction.
- Conduct, speech or activity that interferes with other individuals' actions and/or the learning activities of other students.
- Actions that inhibit college work in any office, classroom, lounge, or other setting.

Some examples of disruptive behavior include:

- Physical violence
- Intoxication/under the influence of a substance
- Verbal abuse or harassment
- Use of profanity or other disrespectful language
- Failing to respect others when they are expressing their viewpoints
- Talking while the instructor or other students are talking
- Constant questions or interruptions that interfere with classroom presentations by the instructor or students
- Creating excessive noise

REDUCING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

It is important that faculty and staff become familiar with the [Code of Student Rights and Responsibilities](#). This document outlines the expectations of students and consequences if disruptive or negative behavior occurs.

All employees should learn to address disruptive behavior quickly and effectively for the well-being of all parties affected by the behavior. By addressing unacceptable behavior when it occurs, the behavior is less likely to continue or escalate. Furthermore, if the inappropriate behavior is allowed to continue, other students are likely to see these actions and be more likely to behave in a similar way.

The information contained within this guide is consistent with the *Code*. The goal behind this document is to empower employees to prevent and/or address disruptive behavior in a manner that discourages future disruptive behavior while protecting the safety and integrity of the academic community.

Faculty/Staff Rights and Responsibilities include the right to:

- Establish and implement academic and behavioral standards
- Outline expectations, verbally and in the syllabi
- Address inappropriate behavior
- Involve other people (Program Chair, Dean, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Campus Security, Campus Police, and community police)
- Make a determination regarding appropriate academic responses and outcomes for inappropriate behavior within the faculty member's class.

It is recommended that instructors include a statement in their syllabus to establish behavioral boundaries, which can be discussed with students the first day of class to create an understanding of behavioral expectations and allow for dialogue to address any concerns. A statement in the syllabus might read:

Classroom Behaviors

Students and instructors each have an important role in maintaining a classroom environment optimal for learning. All parties are expected to treat each other with respect at all times, using thoughtful dialogue. Class discussions are interactive and may contain diverse opinions. The instructor and each student shall be thoughtful in sharing their perspectives and responses with one another. Behaviors such as chatting and whispering during class, the use of electronic equipment, reading the paper during class, preparing to leave before class is over, and consistently arriving late to class are all behaviors that may be disruptive. Please keep these disruptions to a minimum. Inappropriate behavior in the classroom may result in a request for the disruptive student(s) to leave the class and/or be referred to the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. Refer to the *Code* for more information.

Instructors can usually prevent mildly disruptive behaviors from escalating to disputes, or serious acts of misconduct by establishing classroom norms that create a civil environment.

Although all disruptive behavior cannot be prevented, an instructor can create an environment that may reduce certain behaviors. Some examples that may be helpful for professors are:

- Respond immediately if one or more students begin to “test the limits” of behavior. Gently remind students of the expectations and coach them back to correct behavior.
- If the student’s behavior is irritating but not particularly disruptive, you may choose to talk with the student after class. (Examples may include the use of cellular phones, passing notes, sleeping, etc.)
- Demonstrate appropriate classroom behavior through interactions with students.

HOW TO RESPOND TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Initially, it is best to avoid singling out a specific student. Instead, direct a general word of caution to the entire class. In this way, the student may realize that the behavior is inappropriate and will not be tolerated.

Protocol for Instructors

- If a student poses an immediate threat to the safety of themselves or others call 911 or have someone else call.
- Deal with the behavior immediately. The behavior is likely to progress if it is ignored. Try not to embarrass the student, but address the behavior. Strategies may include asking the student to stop. Ask to talk with him or her after class.
- If you observe disruptive behavior occurring during class, make a general statement such as “Let’s focus our attention on the material being discussed and discontinue any other side conversations and activities.”
- Do not take the behavior personally. The behavior, in most instances, has nothing to do with you. You are simply the unfortunate recipient of the behavior.
- If you choose to speak with a student after class, explain why the behavior was inappropriate and inform them of all relevant behavioral expectations for continued participation in the course. Follow-up with a written note summarizing the conversation and your expectations.
- If you feel uncomfortable or unsafe with a student, request that a colleague, program chair, or Dean be present at the time of the meeting.
- When speaking with a student regarding inappropriate behavior, be sure to conduct these conversations in a private setting. Address specific behavior, not student characteristics or your feelings.
- If it is necessary to deal with a student’s behavior during class, use discretion to calmly inform the student that the behavior is disruptive and that it must be discontinued.
- If the behavior continues in a future class, using discretion, ask the student to leave the classroom immediately. Following the class, the instructor should immediately contact the Program Chair and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The instructor should document and forward all pertinent information regarding any incidents to both the Program Chair and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs immediately.
- If a student refuses to leave the classroom, you may choose to adjourn the class. Contact campus security immediately. (See next section.)
- Be sure to keep a log of all incidents. This log should include the date, time, location, and nature of all incidents.
- Save any and all emails and document the dates of all pertinent occurrences in the classroom.

SPECIFIC SCENARIOS TO REVIEW

The Late Student

Things to Think About

- What is your classroom policy?
- Be sure expectations are known. Review, if necessary.
- Life happens—find out what’s going on. (Probation meetings, driving school buses etc) It’s your decision from locking the door to acknowledging them with a nod and continuing to talk!
- Keep the same frame for activities.
- You may need to change seating arrangements so they do not distract when they enter.
- What’s your reaction?
- What’s behind that reaction?

Students that Challenge

Things to Think About

- Try to draw them into conversation.
- Give no resistance.
- Use humor (gently).
- Set up the “agree to disagree” at beginning of class.
- Acknowledge and move on.
- Take the time to find out what is going on in his/her life.
- It may not be you. You may remind them of someone with whom they had a bad experience.
- Polar responders! If you tell them they can’t do something they will do it just to prove they can.

1,000 Excuses

Things to Think About

- Work with them as you would any other student.
- What guidelines did you set up at beginning of course?
- “Listen” to the excuse—it may be relevant! They may not know how to study, use the library etc. We have resources for this! The dog ate my paper not so much. Life does happen though.
- Do you have a class like Math that builds upon each class or do you have a class where you can be a little more flexible with assignments?
- Know your own buttons and personality and style.
- Do you need to punish, help, control?

The Non-Responsive Student

Things to Think About

- Does it matter?
- Try to get to know them even if they are “scary.” You might be surprised!
- Include them but don’t single out or “pick on” them. This can make them be defensive.
- They may be painfully shy.
- They may be uncomfortable talking in front of (or behind) a group.

- It may be a survival mode for them. –Watch and wait mentality, D/V, Veterans, Law Enforcement.
- Take the time to identify the problem and see if they have supports.
- Refer them to the BIT if concerned about harm to self or others.

The Distracted Student

Things to Think About

- Are they bothering anyone?
- Change your style/activities frequently.
- Do hands on activities.
- Make it interesting.
- Take breaks.

DISRUPTION BECOMES TOO MUCH

Generally students will respond to an instructor's request to stop the disruptive behavior. However, on rare occasions a student's actions may not subside. If that happens, instructors may tell the student to leave the classroom. Calmly stating that the student is disrupting the class and they must leave so class may continue is within the rights of the instructor. **If the student is or may become dangerous, see section below.**

If the student leaves, resume class or take a short break and then resume class. The instructor must report the incident that day or the next day to both the Program Chair and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs by completing an [Incident Report](#). The instructor should provide as much detail as possible to correctly and completely explain the situation. Contact information should be included in case of questions.

If the student refuses to leave class, the instructor has a few options. They include:

- Dismiss class and leave the area (with someone else). Ideally the instructor should go to Campus Police and report the situation, but they should not put themselves at greater risk. It can always be reported later.
- Call Campus Security and ask for their immediate assistance. Indicate that you have a student that has refused to leave your class as requested.
- Ask a student to go get or call Campus Security. Have them indicate that you need immediate assistance for a student who refuses to leave class.

If Campus Police are involved, provide them with enough information that they can complete their report. This report, however, does not remove the need for the instructor to provide a detailed Incident Report that day or the next day.

If an incident happens in an office setting, a similar process should occur as in the above classroom setting. If anyone is disruptive or inappropriate, the faculty or staff member should ask them to stop that behavior and/or ask them to leave. Follow the process above, as appropriate.

The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs can remove a student from your class or impose restrictions on students on an immediate interim basis, if necessary. This could be done in cases of behavior which is excessively disruptive, repeated, or behavior that represents a danger to the instructor, the student, or others. It should be noted, however, that students are entitled to due process and have the opportunity to explain their perspective. Generally speaking, before this action is taken, the Vice Chancellor will look for evidence that the student was counseled, coached, or directed in the past against such behavior. Exceptions apply, but anyone experiencing problems with student behavior are encouraged to notify their supervisor and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs early in the process to both document these actions as well as assistance correcting the student behavior.

WHAT TO DO IF A STUDENT APPEARS TO BE DANGEROUS

If you believe that a student is dangerous or that a situation has the potential to escalate into a physical threat to you or others, call 911 or campus police to report the behavior. If you are confronted with a situation where you cannot contact the police department, please utilize the following guidelines:

- Maintain a safe distance. Do not turn your back on the student.
- Unless you are being physically assaulted, do not touch the student or his/her belongings. This may be interpreted as a threat.
- Use a calm, non-confrontational approach and manner to defuse the situation.
- If a threat of harm is present, immediately dismiss the class. Do not mention disciplinary action or police intervention. If you have already mentioned these, direct the student's attention away from the consequences of his/her behavior. Once the student has calmed down and/or has left the area, contact campus Police.

In this type of scenario, the employee **must call the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs that day or by 10 am the next day.** In addition, they must provide an [Incident Report](#) regarding the incident to both the Program Chair and the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs. The instructor should provide as much detail as possible to correctly and completely explain the situation. Contact information for the instructor should be included.

The Discipline Process*

Ivy Tech Community College attempts to help students' correct behavior, when needed, and learn from these experiences. Imposing sanctions or restrictions on a student may be necessary at times, either as another learning opportunity or as a measure of accountability, but these actions should always be viewed as later options. Corrective guidance and coaching students through their development toward appropriate behavior should always be the College's goal.

Whenever disciplinary action is considered, employees should understand that is essential to treat the student fairly and in a systematic way. It is important that College officials:

- Provide a warning describing the nature of the misconduct including information on what section of the *Code* the student has violated;

- Clearly explain the expectations of the students to them;
- Provide the student a reasonable opportunity to correct the behavior; and
- Provide a procedure to appeal the assessment of the conduct and any disciplinary actions taken.

**Regardless of the incident, where it occurred, or who was involved, documentation of the events is critical.*

More process information can be shared if, and when, it becomes necessary for employees to be involved in the formal disciplinary process. All information is also available in the *Code*.

KEEPING PEOPLE INFORMED

If the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs or other College officials get involved assisting instructors and/or staff with student behavior issues, information will be shared, as appropriate, to keep them informed. However, The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does provide some restrictions on who and how much detail may be shared. Each employee will be communicated with and information discussed, as appropriate, to help the student's development and learning, while also supporting the employee's need for understanding the process and the resolution to the situation.

THE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION TEAM (BIT)

The regional or campus Behavioral Intervention Team (BIT) can assist students who may exhibit behavior that may be an indication of concern. The BIT also supports instructors and staff who may recognize student concerns and need assistance to adequately assess and support the student. Sometimes these behaviors are disciplinary in nature, sometimes they are not. Instructors and staff don't need to worry where or how to report concerns. If in doubt, report the situation to the BIT using the [Incident Report](#). If the situation requires a disciplinary approach, the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs will act accordingly. The Vice Chancellor is one of the Co-Chairs, along with the Public Service Faculty Member.

CONCLUSION

The education of students takes place throughout the college environment in many ways. In the classroom, subject matter ideas and theory are explored. In the classroom and out, other lessons are also learned. Behaviors are either reinforced or corrected, deadlines are recognized or ignored, rude or disruptive behaviors tolerated or guided toward civility. It is important for all employees to help students learn through a caring, guiding approach. And, when accountability for actions is appropriate, college officials should be well equipped to do so with documentation.

It is when all these steps are done in a caring, developmental fashion that the faculty and staff truly embrace the college mission and are true educators.