



TECHNICAL UPDATE

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WHAT IS CIVILITY AND WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Heraclitus, a Greek philosopher, is quoted as saying “change is the only constant in life.” Whether it be politics, religion, or changes in social norms that spark controversial opinions, it is natural for humans to develop their own philosophical beliefs regarding the changes that occur in our world. When one employee has differing views than another and either employee has an emotional intelligence (EQ) toward the lower end of the spectrum, incivility can occur in the workplace. Civility in the workplace must be maintained for a stable and productive organization.

Civility can be defined as politeness and courtesy in behavior or speech. It is important to recognize incivility in the workplace and address it right away.

Examples of workplace incivility include:

- Acting temperamental and yelling at others.
- Talking behind other employees' backs, spreading gossip.
- Being disrespectful or talking down to other employees.
- Sabotaging someone's project or assignment or trying to ruin an employee's reputation.
- Failing to pay attention during meetings or refusing to respond or purposefully responding late.
- Interrupting or belittling employees during meetings, presentations, or conversations.
- Racial or gender-based comments (this could be considered harassment).

A CULTURE OF CIVILITY

It is important to promote a culture of positivity, respect, and politeness. Creating a culture of civility must be modeled from the top of the organization down to all employees through every interaction. Employees will follow the examples of appropriate behavior from their leaders. Establish documented standards and expectations of what is considered to be appropriate and inappropriate behavior.

Hold training sessions to educate employees on expectations, as well as how to recognize and address inappropriate behavior when it occurs. Some may not be aware that they are being uncivil and training sessions will help bring awareness to all employees. Promote and embody active listening skills and positive feedback to demonstrate respectful constructive communication.

Supervisors and managers should stay present, paying close attention to the interactions between employees. Working alongside employees shows you care and are paying attention to the office environment. If incivility is present, quickly address the inappropriate behavior. If left unchecked, inappropriate behavior allowed to continue in the workplace can lead to a hostile work environment. When this type of behavior persists, people may find new employment or file a hostile workplace lawsuit against the county.



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR COUNTIES

Do you have unusually high turnover in a specific department or division? Maybe one location that just can't seem to keep good employees? That may be an indication of incivility occurring in the workplace. It would be productive to revisit your county's policies, employee handbook and/or provide training on civility in the workplace.

Check out the online [Training Library](#), available to CTSI members. Resources designed to meet the needs of Colorado county employees include *HR Respecting Boundaries of Others*, *Emotional Intelligence Crash Course*, and *Would I Work for Me?* Please contact a CTSI employee for any assistance.