

NU Offers Staff Complaint Resources

During the last year NUSAC offered several brownbag lunch topics on how to deal with difficult people. The response to these brownbag topics was overwhelming. As a result, it became clear to NUSAC that staff members were unsure of the resources available to them when difficult situations arise in the work place. Below you will find a brief outline of the resources we encourage staff to utilize to improve their work environment.

Staff members should be aware of their rights and responsibilities at the University and are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the NU Staff Handbook (dated 2001) and the employee complaint process. The most recent version of the Staff Handbook 2001 can be found online at:
<http://www.northwestern.edu/hr/HANDBOOK2001.pdf>.

Ideally, problems would be resolved before they reach the formal complaint stage. Staff is encouraged to take advantage of the resources available to them to resolve difficult situations. Employees may choose to seek assistance and guidance from the personnel resources available in their departments or through Department of Human Resource (HR) staff (Chicago campus phone number (312) 503-8481, Evanston campus phone number (847) 491-7507). Staff may also utilize NUSAC (contact via email at nusac@northwestern.edu) or Perspectives, the Faculty and Staff Assistance Program (phone number (800) 456-6327 or (630) 932-8008).

There are different categories of employee complaints. The employee complaint procedure outlined in this article will cover matters of improper or incorrect application of policy, suspension and employment termination. Detailed descriptions for the complaint procedure related to discrimination, disability or sexual harassment can be found both in the 2001 edition of the staff handbook and on the HR web site.

If an employee believes that he or she is being treated unfairly on the job he or she should be able to voice their complaints and have them reviewed. Employees are encouraged to first attempt to resolve the complaint by speaking with their supervisor and working within their department. If this avenue is unsuccessful, then an employee may take their complaint to the Department of Human Resources for review. On the Chicago campus

employees should contact the HR Consultant, Abbott Hall, 710 N. Lake Shore Drive, Chicago, phone (312) 503-8481. Evanston complaints should be taken to the HR Consultant or the Employee Relations Specialist at 720 University Place, Evanston, phone (847) 491-7507.

There are certain procedural options that an employee may choose to take in dealing with their complaint. An employee may start with any one of the following steps (These steps are taken directly out of the 2001 staff handbook, p. 49).

- Informal discussion only. The employee may choose to have a confidential informal conversation with a member of the Human Resources professional staff. No further action need be taken.
- Personal Action. The employee may decide to act on his or her own, perhaps discussing the matter with the person complained against.
- Human Resources Facilitation. The employee may ask a member of Human Resources professional staff to assist in meeting with the person complained against. If this meeting concludes with a satisfactory solution, the employee may choose to take no further action.
- Formal Investigation. The employee may write to the appropriate Human Resources representative stating the complaint and asking for an investigation and resolution of the complaint, which may include questioning the person complained against and other relevant parties. On the basis of the information, Human Resources determines a resolution of the complaint and notifies the parties to the complaint, in writing when appropriate.

An employee may choose to be accompanied by another employee in voicing a complaint. The accompanying employee may observe and provide support through the steps of this procedure, but does not express advocacy. An accompanying employee does not participate in discussions with one's supervisor, or in a peer review.

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YMCA Child Care Center Kicks Off

Parents are invited to visit the McGaw YMCA Child Care Center to kick off its priority fall registration period for Northwestern families.

The registration/open house event will be held on **February 25 from 7:30 to 10 a.m.** at the center located at 1420 Maple on the southwest corner of Maple and Lake near the main YMCA building. Visitors can tour the facility, meet the staff and learn about fall programs and how to register.

The McGaw YMCA Child Care Center has been designated Northwestern University's choice in childcare. The University's recent partnership with the YMCA affords the following benefits to University families:

- The center will allot a number of spaces to University families for childcare services beginning in September 2003. Priority registration for University families begins February 24.

- The University will fund enhancements to the YMCA Child Care Center programs in such areas as music, art, theatre, etc.
- An oversight committee consisting of University parents and administrators along with YMCA representatives will determine how enhancement funding will be allocated.
- A YMCA youth membership is included in the childcare tuition fee.
- The University will award fee assistance to families demonstrating the most need.

The McGaw Child Care Center provides year-round childcare for infants and preschool children as well as after-school and summer camp programs for children in elementary and middle school grades.

If you have questions about the University's agreement with the YMCA, please call Katie Krauch at the work/life, child & family resource office at (847) 491-3612.

Ways to Tame Anxiety by Jeffrey N. Blaine, LCSW, CEAP, Perspectives FSAP

It is a rare individual who does not experience anxiety. I have yet to meet one! So, given that anxiety is a normal, and sometimes useful, emotion, how can we keep it manageable?

At the earliest signs of stress, use these methods to make it work for you, not against you:

1. Pause and assess a tense situation for a few seconds in a calm, detached frame of mind. Remind yourself why the task is so important, necessary and in your best interest... even if you dread it.

2. Expect and welcome mild waves of stress. Treat anxiety as an energy source, a tool to focus better on your goal. Don't fight it. *Example:* Look forward to the adrenaline rush that you'll feel when you stand before your colleagues to start your presentation

3. Treat your stress dispassionately by "grading" it on a 1-to-10 scale. *Example:* You start to feel anxious about a due date a week away, so you grade your stress a mere "3". That helps you realize that, as stressful situations go, this one isn't so bad.

4. Remember, often what we are anxious about never comes to pass. So being anxious about something that doesn't happen is like paying interest on a loan you never take out! None of us would do that knowingly. Perhaps there is some anxiety that you can skip altogether.

When you have problems that are troubling you, please remember that the Faculty & Staff Assistance Program (FSAP) is available to help you, and members of your household. This is a free, confidential benefit provided by Northwestern University.

The experienced staff at Perspectives is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Please feel free to call us at 1-800-456-6327.