

Year 1 Public Description of Work for  
Action Collaborative on Preventing Sexual Harassment in Higher Education

The University of Chicago

**Alternative Means of Resolution**

**This Action Applies to Rubric Item(s):** Rubric Item #14 - Implementing Restorative or Transformative Justice and Alternative Resolutions

**Description of Work:**

The 2018 NASEM report states that “In an effort to change behavior and improve the climate, it may also be appropriate for institutions to undertake some rehabilitation-focused measures, even though these may not be sanctions per se. Such responses might include opportunities to learn, empathize, and recognize and value differences, and they might involve focus groups with professional facilitators, participation in restorative justice circles, and empathy training.” Additionally, the report notes that “target-led resolution options and mechanisms” can reduce the harm that targets experience when reporting an experience of sexual harassment. Examples of a target-led resolution can include restorative or transformative justice and the use of an Ombuds officer.

The University of Chicago’s Office for Access and Equity (OAE), within Equal Opportunity Programs (EOP) led a year-long initiative to establish an alternative dispute resolution model. This was a new initiative for the University of Chicago and was based on recommendations from the 2018 NASEM report as well as research into best practices that helped to determine the feasibility of resolution options beyond what the current University policies provide. The University undertook the following prior to developing the ADR model:

- Conducted listening tour of key campus partners regarding conflict resolution mechanisms at UChicago to inform ADR needs going forward (Jan. 2019 – April 2019)
- Conducted benchmarking presence of Ombuds offices at peer institutions (May 2019)
- Conducted one-ones with conflict resolution professionals in Chicago-land area on the development and use of mediation/ other alternative dispute resolution programs in the higher education setting, including specific to discrimination/ unlawful harassment reports (July 2019 – November 2019)
- Led development of one-page resource on current EOP resolution offerings.
- Implemented information gathering for EOP team on the resolution option elected by visitors to EOP office (to inform development going forward)
- Hosted two conflict resolution trainings for EOP/ other key campus partners led by the Center for Conflict Resolution: 1) 40-hour mediation skills training, and 2) 2-hour training on conflict resolution (June/ July 2019 and August 2019)
- Developed a framework for facilitated conversations to be provided by EOP

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- Representatives attended trainings on this area of practice, including the International Ombudsman Association conference, the IOA Foundations Course (for Ombuds), the CCR 40-hour mediation training, and a local Ombuds conference.

Following the research and development of an ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) model, OAE now offers the following conflict resolution services, described as “[The Choice Is Yours](#)”, as appropriate under University Policy:

A. Reporting. An individual may share their experience and information shared will be retained in Equal Opportunity Program records.

B. Conflict coaching. A visitor may request coaching on techniques for speaking with the person about whom the visitor is raising concerns. This may also include conversations with the visitor to reframe issues and work to identify needs and interests and evaluate options.

C. Coaching/ Shuttle diplomacy. An individual may request that EOP staff speak with the person about whom the individual is raising concerns as an intermediary. EOP staff may share information about the concerns as well as the impact that the individual reported the person’s behavior had on the person. EOP may then communicate back to the reporting party regarding the conversation.

D. Mediation/ Facilitated Conversation. An individual may elect to mediate their concern. Mediation is a process through which a neutral and impartial party (the mediator) assists in opening dialogue and communication to work to understand and potentially resolve conflict. Both the reporting party and the person(s) about whom the reporting party is raising concerns must agree to mediation. Under the current Policy, Mediation is not appropriate, under any circumstances, for allegations of sexual assault, sexual abuse, dating violence, domestic violence, or stalking. EOP may also refer matters to an external mediator at the Center for Conflict Resolution in Chicago.

E. Training/ Office Hours. An individual may request that EOP staff provide additional training and/or supportive resources to the visitor’s unit, which may include workshops or training on the Policy, prevention/ expectations of behavior, and negotiation or conflict resolution skills.

OAE has created a feedback form for individuals that engage the ADR process, which will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the offerings and to inform the development of additional offerings. A Faculty Advisory Group will be the primary stakeholders that will guide the University’s development of the model in partnership with the Equal Opportunity Programs area. The goal for the next phase of development will be to further develop the webpages and

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resource handouts that describe the ADR option, and to enhance communication to the larger campus community on this new initiative.

**Website for further information (if applicable):**

<https://equalopportunityprograms.uchicago.edu/access-and-equity/>

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