RESPONDING TO
WORKPLACE BULLYING
The University of Massachusetts Amherst is committed to providing faculty, staff and students with a workplace environment where they may pursue their careers or studies without being bullied. Bullying in the workplace is prohibited under the terms of the following Trustee policy on Principles of Employee Conduct (T96-136):

Institutions of higher education are entrusted with great resources and commensurably great responsibilities. They must meet their mission of research, teaching, and service in ways that truly enrich the society that supports them and truly serve the students, parents, and alumni who in joining the university community become life-long members of the extended university learning family. College and university leaders play a key role in assuring that high standards of ethical practice attend to the delivery of services to their various constituents and to the custody and use by all their faculty, staff and students of the resources entrusted to them. The University of Massachusetts embraces the values expressed in these Principles of Employee Conduct and expects their observance by all its employees.

- University employees are entrusted with public resources and are expected to understand their responsibilities with respect to conflicts of interest and to behave in ways consistent both with law and with University policy.

- University employees are expected to be competent and to strive to advance competence both in themselves and in others. The conduct of University employees is expected to be characterized by integrity and dignity, and they should expect and encourage such conduct by others.

- University employees are expected to be honest and conduct themselves in ways that accord respect to themselves and others.

- University employees are expected to accept full responsibility for their actions and to strive to serve others and accord fair and just treatment to all.

- University employees are expected to conduct themselves in ways that foster forthright expression of opinion and tolerance for the view of others.

- University employees are expected to be aware of and understand those institutional objectives and policies relevant to their job responsibilities, be capable of appropriately interpreting them within and beyond the institution, and contribute constructively to their ongoing evaluation and reformulation.

- The University is responsible for communicating to University employees the content of these Principles of Employee Conduct and for ensuring that the standards of conduct contained herein are met. The University expects to provide its employees:

  - a work environment that is professional and supportive;

  - a clear sense of the duties of their job, the procedures for performance review, and access to relevant University policies and procedures; within the scope of each employee’s assigned areas
of authority and responsibility, the duty to exercise appropriate judgment and initiative in performing duties;

- the right to seek appropriate review of matters that violate the ethical principles contained in these Principles.

WORKPLACE BULLYING

In accordance with the Principles of Employee Conduct, the following guidance is provided for employees who believe they have been subjected to bullying in the workplace and for supervisors, who are expected as part of their responsibilities to ensure that any such instances are dealt with promptly. It provides for both informal and formal remedies. The goal is to provide a fair and prompt determination about whether bullying has occurred and, if so, to take appropriate steps to ensure that it is not repeated.

Repeated, unreasonable behavior by a person or group of people aimed at another person or group that intimidates, degrades, offends, threatens, or humiliates them generally constitutes workplace bullying. Workplace bullying can also be a single substantial, severe action. Workplace bullying is NOT: a tough, but fair supervisor; a tough union advocate; a reclusive co-worker; or other similar conduct.

In determining whether an alleged incident constitutes bullying, supervisors will look at the totality of the circumstances, such as the nature of the behavior and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. The final decision regarding a suitable response will be made from a finding of facts on a case-by-case basis, from any record of previous bullying by the alleged bully, and taking into account whether the alleged bully is in a supervisory position with respect to the complainant. In all cases in which discipline is imposed, the procedures of the applicable collective bargaining agreement will be observed.

The Chancellor’s Office, in concert with the Vice Chancellors, will see that all supervisors on the Amherst campus receive information and training concerning workplace bullying and concerning the responsibilities of supervisors when complaints are received.

PROCEDURES

I. Informal Resolution

In some cases, informal resolution of a situation may provide a more satisfactory result than proceeding directly to a formal review. Resolution through agreement, consultation, or facilitation can assist to create a more sustainable change in behavior or the work environment; in general, people are more likely to abide by a resolution they agree to as opposed to one imposed by an authority. For these reasons, the University supports the use of alternative dispute resolution (ADR) when all parties are in agreement to utilize such a process. If such efforts are
not successful, the procedures below may be initiated. Informal attempts at settlement will not
unduly delay resolution.

Self-Help

The goal in any complaint process is to stop the bullying behavior. If a complainant
believes they are experiencing inappropriate conduct and can talk with the individual responsible
for the inappropriate conduct, then the following steps may be taken:

- talk with the person(s) promptly;
- describe the behavior and its effect;
- request that the behavior stop immediately.

The complainant should consider having the above conversation with a witness present who
can corroborate the exchange. If this is not possible or practical, the complainant might write a
letter incorporating the above points and give it to the person in front of a witness. The complainant
should retain a copy of this letter.

In all instances, the complainant should document the event(s), including dates, times,
places and witnesses.

If this action fails to provide the complainant with the appropriate relief, or as an alternative
to using this approach, the measures described below may be considered.

Ombuds Office, 823 Campus Center, 545-0867

The Ombuds Office provides confidential, neutral, independent and informal alternative
dispute resolution assistance with any University related concerns. Services include
consultation, conflict coaching, mediation, shuttle diplomacy (where the parties do not have to
meet face to face), social justice mediation (where certain power dynamics may also be
addressed), facilitated conversations, and restorative practices.

II. Administrative Review

A. Any employee of the University of Massachusetts Amherst who believes that they have been the
target of workplace bullying may file a complaint, orally or in writing, with the supervisor of the
person alleged to have engaged in bullying behavior. A supervisor who receives a complaint of
bullying shall:
1) Maintain a written record of the complaint and all steps taken to resolve it
2) Meet with the complainant
3) Meet with the alleged bully (hereinafter, the “respondent”)
4) Take appropriate steps to insure that there is no retaliation against any party or witness
5) Investigate as needed including interviewing witnesses, examining evidence, reviewing
documentation, etc.
6) Make a determination about whether bullying has occurred and, if so, take appropriate steps to ensure that it is not repeated. Those steps might include oral and/or written instruction to the respondent, discussion among the parties, and/or disciplinary action.

7) Maintain a record of the steps taken to investigate and, if appropriate, redress the complaint; these records may be reviewed as the process progresses. At any point during the process, the supervisor may order the imposition of interim measures deemed by them necessary for the protection of either of the parties. Such measures may include but not be limited to change in work assignment or location for the respondent or, with mutual consent of the complainant and their supervisor, a change in work assignment or location for the complainant.

A supervisor who has observed what they believe may constitute workplace bullying does not require a complaint from an employee and should, rather, take prompt action to address the situation, following the process above.

B. An employee who files a complaint in accordance with the above process and is not satisfied that the concerning behavior has stopped may file an appeal with the next supervisory level in which the individual alleged to have engaged in bullying behavior is employed. If the original complaint was filed with the Dean/Director, the appeal should be filed with the appropriate Vice Chancellor or Associate Chancellor. A Dean/Director or Vice Chancellor/Associate Chancellor who receives such an appeal shall:

1) Meet with the complainant
2) Review the written record maintained by the supervisor
3) Conduct further investigation if needed
4) Make a determination about whether bullying has occurred and, if so, take appropriate steps to ensure that it is not repeated. If any disciplinary action is contemplated, the Dean/Director or Vice Chancellor/Associate Chancellor shall first meet with the complainant.
5) Maintain a record of the steps taken to investigate and, if appropriate, redress the complaint

At any point during the process, the Dean/Director or Vice Chancellor/Associate Chancellor may order the imposition of interim measures deemed by them necessary for the protection of either of the parties. Such measures may include but not be limited to change in work assignment or location for the respondent or, with mutual consent of the complainant and their supervisor, a change in work assignment or location for the complainant.

A Dean/Director or Vice Chancellor/Associate Chancellor may appoint a designee to carry out any or all of the functions described here.

This procedure is not intended to impair or limit the right of anyone to seek a remedy available under state or federal law. A complainant may file a complaint with an external agency to meet state and federal agency deadlines without jeopardizing their right to a University resolution.
III. Formal Review

As an alternative to the informal and administrative procedures described above, or if those procedures have not resolved the situation, any employee of the University of Massachusetts Amherst who believes that they have been the target of workplace bullying may file a request for a review with the Chancellor’s Office.

In most cases, the University believes that informal approaches to resolution are in the best interest of all parties. Therefore, when a request for a review is received, the Chancellor’s Office will attempt to assist the parties in effecting informal resolution before proceeding to a formal review. If such efforts are not successful, the procedures below will be initiated. Informal attempts at settlement will not unduly delay resolution and will not ordinarily extend beyond thirty days without the agreement of the complainant and the respondent.

The goal of the workplace bullying initiative is to ensure that when bullying is alleged, appropriate steps are taken to ensure that any bullying that has occurred is discontinued and does not recur. Accordingly, if, at any time in the process, a bullying complaint becomes moot due to organizational changes, process changes, or other action by a supervisor that has clearly stopped the behavior that formed the basis of the complaint, the Chancellor’s Office may dismiss the complaint. If the complainant later files a complaint about subsequent behavior by the same respondent, the earlier behavior may be referenced in the new complaint.

As indicated in the definition of bullying above, “bullying is not… a tough but fair supervisor.” Accordingly, the Chancellor’s Office shall have the authority to dismiss cases that are based entirely on disciplinary action when that discipline has already been upheld in a union grievance.

As in any grievance procedure, justice requires that the legal rights, as well as the right to academic freedom, of the Complainant and the Respondent be fully assured. The University will make every effort to protect these rights and will knowingly undertake no action that threatens or compromises them. However, nothing in these procedures is intended to prevent the University administration from taking appropriate interim measures to protect one or more of the parties until such time final adjudication regarding the complaint has been reached. This procedure is not intended to impair or limit the right of anyone to seek a remedy available under state or federal law. A Complainant may file a complaint with an external agency to meet state and federal agency deadlines without jeopardizing their right to a University review. Upon official notification that an individual has filed with an external agency, the University will inquire if the Complainant wishes to continue with the formal review process.

If the Respondent is a member of the Chancellor’s staff, the Chancellor will appoint a designee to serve the role described for the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor in this procedure. [Note: In all instances throughout this document where the term Vice Chancellor is used, it will be understood that the term also refers to the Chancellor or designee, whichever is appropriate.] When the Respondent is an undergraduate or graduate student, the Complainant should contact the Chancellor’s Office, which shall review the circumstances of the case and determine what procedure is appropriate.

III.A. Review Request Procedure

The request for review must be submitted in writing to the Chancellor’s Office on an official review request form [link here] (also obtainable from the Chancellor’s Office). The request must clearly and concisely state a description of the behavior being complained about; it may also indicate any
remedy sought. The form must be signed and dated by the Complainant. The Chancellor’s Office will
provide the Respondent and the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor with a copy of the request within ten
days of receipt. The Respondent will have twenty days after receiving notice from the Chancellor’s
Office to submit a written response to the Chancellor’s Office. This response, which must be submitted
on the official form [link here] (also available from the Chancellor’s Office), will contain a full and specific
response to each claim in the review request, admitting, denying, or providing a full explanation of the
allegations. The response must be signed and dated by the Respondent. The Chancellor’s Office will
forward a copy of the response to the Complainant and to the Respondent’s vice chancellor.

III. B. Fact-Finding Review

There shall be a standing Fact-Finding Board, composed of four members appointed by the
Chancellor and two members appointed by each of the following unions: MSP, PSU, USA/MTA, and
AFSCME. All appointments to this Board shall be approved by the unions and the administration.
Members of the Fact-Finding Board shall serve three-year terms, which may be renewed and should be
staggered over time. The members of the Fact-Finding Board shall undergo intensive and ongoing
training in investigatory techniques.

Within twenty days of receipt of a written request for a review, the Chancellor’s Office shall
convene a two-person Fact-Finding Team, selected from the membership of the Fact-Finding Board. The
two-person Fact-Finding Team shall include one member of Fact-Finding Board appointed by the unions
and one member appointed by the administration. The union member shall be selected by the unions,
and the administration member shall be selected by the Chancellor’s Office. The Fact-Finding Team shall
conduct a preliminary review of the complaint, interviewing the complainant and the respondent. The
Fact-Finding Team may also interview any other University employee they believe may have information
relevant and necessary to their review. Within twenty days of convening, the Fact-Finding Team shall
reach one or more of the following conclusions and submit a written report of its findings to the
Chancellor’s Office, with copies to the respondent’s supervisor and vice chancellor, the complainant,
and the respondent; the complainant and respondent shall have ten days to identify any facts not in
dispute that have been recorded inaccurately in the Fact-Finding Team’s report:

1) The Fact-Finding Team may determine that insufficient facts exist to support a claim that
bullying has occurred and the complaint should be dismissed. If the complaint raises issues that
are best addressed in a different office or a different forum, the Fact-Finding Team shall refer
the issue as appropriate.

2) The Fact-Finding Team may determine that it is more likely than not that bullying has occurred
and shall inform the Chancellor’s Office, the respondent’s vice chancellor, and the supervisor or
other administrator closest to and best able to resolve the situation (hereinafter referred to as
the supervisor). The supervisor shall take appropriate steps to ensure that the bullying does not
recur and may provide appropriate relief for the complainant and appropriate education and
possible discipline for the respondent. The supervisor may additionally arrange for mediation,
conciliation, or other alternative dispute resolution to ensure an appropriate work environment.
The supervisor shall, in consultation with the Chancellor’s Office [Employee Relations Office] and
vice chancellor, develop and implement a resolution and take appropriate steps to reduce the
likelihood of recurrence of bullying behavior; the supervisor, vice chancellor, and Chancellor’s
Office may consult with the Fact-Finding Team prior to developing the resolution. The
Chancellor’s Office [Employee Relations Office] shall advise the supervisor concerning applicable
requirements of collective bargaining agreements and shall attempt to ensure that any
disciplinary action is equitable with respect to similar situations campus-wide.
3) In addition to or as an alternative to #2 above, the Fact-Finding Team may determine that the situation that led to the complaint involves a larger group of individuals than the complainant and respondent and that a review of an entire department or other comparable unit is warranted and shall inform the Chancellor’s Office, with a copy to the appropriate supervisor and vice chancellor. The vice chancellor shall arrange for such a review, with the goal of determining whether workplace bullying has occurred and, if so, shall take appropriate steps to address the situation.

Within two months after a determination under #2 or #3 above, or sooner if the Fact-Finding Team deems it necessary, the Fact-Finding Team shall interview the complainant and respondent to determine whether the recommended intervention has been successful in restoring a work environment free of bullying behavior. If the Fact-Finding Team concludes that the situation has been resolved, the matter shall be closed. If the Fact-Finding Team concludes that the situation has not been resolved, the Fact-Finding Team shall prepare and submit to the Chancellor’s Office a written report of its findings and shall refer the complaint for consideration by a Review Panel. If at any stage in this process the Fact-Finding Team cannot reach agreement, the complaint shall proceed to a Review Panel.

When a formal review is to be conducted, it will be conducted in accordance with the procedures outlined below.

III.C. The Workplace Bullying Board

The Workplace Bullying Board consists of thirty members of the University community, appointed by the Chancellor, each for a term of three years, which may be renewed. Every effort will be made to ensure a widely representative and diverse group. PSU, USA/MTA, AFSCME, GEO, and MSP shall each be invited to nominate eight individuals for the Board. The Chancellor shall appoint four individuals from each of these groups of nominees, together with non-unit employees. If any organization invited to submit nominees fails to do so, the Chancellor will appoint Board members from the relevant constituent group.

Following their appointment, Board members will participate in and initial workshop and ongoing training designed to educate them about workplace bullying as well as the procedures for conducting a workplace bullying review. Members of the Board shall receive appropriate release time for their participation in training and service on review panels.

III.D. The Workplace Bullying Review Panel

Within ten days of receipt of the Fact-Finding Team’s referral, the Chancellor’s Office will appoint a three-member Review Panel. At least one member of each Review Panel will be drawn from the Complainant’s and Respondent’s respective constituencies (that is, classified employee, faculty member, graduate or undergraduate student employee, or professional staff). A review panel appointee may, for appropriate reason, request that they be excused. The Chancellor’s Office shall render a decision regarding any such request. Upon approval of such request, the Chancellor’s Office shall appoint another member to fill the vacancy. The Chancellor’s Office will designate one member to serve as the Chair.

Prior to their participation in a review, the Chancellor’s Office will meet with the Review Panel to review workplace bullying issues and the Review Panel procedures. Both the Complainant and the Respondent will be invited to attend this meeting.
Within two days of appointment of the Review Panel, the parties will receive written notification of the Panel’s appointment from the Chancellor’s Office. Each party to the proceeding will have the right to object to the appointment of any panel member on the grounds that that member’s participation would jeopardize the party’s right to a fair and reliable review, based on a demonstrable conflict-of-interest. All objections must be submitted in writing to the Chancellor’s Office and must be received in the Chancellor’s Office not later than five days following notification. The Chancellor’s Office shall determine whether objections have merit; will judge whether a panel member will be seated; and will provide the objecting party with a written decision within five days of receipt of the written objection. This decision will be final.

In the event that the duties and responsibility of the Review Panel extend into a period of non-responsibility, the review may, at the discretion of the Chancellor’s Office, be suspended until the period of responsibility resumes.

III.F. Decision of the Review Panel

Following a review of the information provided by the Fact-Finding Team and any other parties the Review Panel chooses to interview, as well as any documents it has received, the Review Panel shall determine whether it believes the Respondent has engaged in workplace bullying of the Complainant. The standard for determining whether workplace bullying has occurred shall be a preponderance of the evidence. A finding that workplace bullying has occurred shall require concurrence of at least two of the three members of the Panel. The Panel will prepare a written report noting its conclusion. This report will clearly state the credible facts of the case and the supporting evidence, and the conclusion must be fully supported by evidence provided either by the Fact-Finding Team or by the Panel’s interviews and review of documents. The conclusion of the Panel shall be submitted to the Chancellor’s Office within thirty days of the completion of the Panel’s review.

Findings

When the Panel finds that no workplace bullying has occurred, the Chancellor’s Office will
forward the Panel’s report, along with appropriate commentary, to the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor, with a copy to the Chancellor. The Vice Chancellor will review the materials and submit their final decision within twenty days to the Complainant, the Respondent, and the Chancellor’s Office.

When the Panel finds that workplace bullying has occurred, the Panel may recommend a remedy. The Chancellor’s Office will review the Panel’s recommendation and provide appropriate commentary to the Vice Chancellor. This commentary may include an adjustment to the recommended remedy if, upon review of University records, it is determined that there have been past violations of this policy by the Respondent; specific written reasons for the adjusted remedy must be provided. The Chancellor’s Office will subsequently forward the Panel’s report, the complete record of the review, and appropriate commentary to the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor, with a copy to the Chancellor.

The Vice Chancellor will review the Panel’s recommendation and render their decision in writing, with reasons for any deviation from the Panel’s findings or recommendations, directly to the Complainant, the Respondent, and the Chancellor’s Office within twenty days of receipt of all of the materials noted above. When the Vice Chancellor determines that no workplace bullying has occurred, that finding shall be registered in all University records pertaining to the case. When the Vice Chancellor determines that workplace bullying has occurred, the Vice Chancellor will be responsible for determining and implementing any remedy. The Vice Chancellor’s determination of remedy (including the dates by which each will be implemented) will be included in the written decision submitted to the Complainant, the Respondent, and the Chancellor’s Office; copies of the vice chancellor’s report provided to the Complainant and Respondent will be redacted as necessary to protect to privacy rights of the respective parties. The Chancellor’s Office will notify the Panel of the final decision.

Following receipt of the Vice Chancellor’s decision, the parties may request copies of any written record. Requests must be submitted in writing to the Chancellor’s Office.

III.G. Appeal

Within thirty days after receiving a written copy of the Vice Chancellor’s decision, the Respondent, the Complainant, or the Chancellor’s Office may request a review by submitting a written petition to the Chancellor (who may appoint a designee to handle the review). The petition for review will set forth in detail the specific grounds upon which review is sought. The Chancellor will ensure that the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor, Chancellor’s Office, the Panel, and the parties receive a copy of the petition. The Chancellor will review the record of the case, which includes the Fact-Finding Team’s report; documents considered by the Panel; the Panel’s findings and recommendations; and any record of previous offenses. Based upon this review, the Chancellor may modify or vacate a Vice Chancellor’s decision. The Chancellor may, for example, decide that the Panel’s findings are unsupported by a preponderance of evidence, or that some aspect of the process violated an individual’s legal rights, academic freedom, or these procedures.

The Chancellor or designee may: a) affirm or revise the decision of the Vice Chancellor; b) request specific findings from the Panel; or c) remand the case to the Chancellor’s Office for a new review before a new Review Panel. In the course of review, the Chancellor may consult with University Legal Counsel, who will have access to the complete record of the case. The Chancellor or designee will render a written decision within twenty days following receipt of the petition for review and all materials relating to the grievance. The Chancellor’s decision will be sent to the Respondent’s Vice Chancellor, the Complainant, the Respondent, the Fact-Finding Team, the Review Panel, and the Chancellor’s Office. The Chancellor’s decision will constitute final University disposition of the matter.
III.H. Confidentiality

All parties involved in any aspect of this process will act at all times to preserve the confidentiality of these proceedings. Information will be shared with those individuals who have a legitimate and operational need to be informed, and to the extent that it is necessary to maintain the effectiveness of this process.

III.I. Deadlines

All deadlines expressed as days herein shall mean calendar days.

A Complainant will have six months following an incident to request a review under these procedures unless they can show good reason for having that deadline waived. Requests for exceptions to the filing deadline must be made in writing to the Chancellor’s Office, which will render a decision in writing following review of the request. Legal counsel may be consulted in making this determination.

In some instances, particularly when a pattern of behavior is the subject of the complaint, supporting evidence may include reports of behavior that occurred outside of the six-month filing deadline. In these instances, a written request for an exception is not required; however, the Chancellor’s Office may be asked by the Respondent to rule on the admissibility of such evidence. The decision of the Chancellor’s Office in these instances is final.

Failure to meet any of the deadlines stipulated in this procedure will not result in a decision by default or prevent the process from continuing.

III.J. Requirements for Participation & Withdrawals

If a Respondent fails to answer a charge or to participate in this process, the Chancellor’s Office will notify their Vice Chancellor of that fact. Failure to respond to a claim or to appear before a Fact-Finding Team or a Review Panel if requested will be considered a breach of responsibility and could result in disciplinary action.

Furthermore, a Complainant or Respondent will not prevent this process from proceeding by their silence or absence; failure to respond to a complaint or to appear before a Fact-Finding Team or a Review Panel may result in the process proceeding solely on the basis of the available testimony and evidence.

A Complainant may request to withdraw a review request after it has been filed by submitting written reasons for the withdrawal to the Chancellor’s Office. The Chancellor’s Office will be responsible for notifying the Respondent of the request to withdraw. The Chancellor’s Office, after consultation with the respondent and appropriate administrators including, where necessary, legal counsel, will issue a written determination to the parties regarding the request for withdrawal.

III.K. Standard of Proof

A violation of the Principles of Employee Conduct under these procedures will be found only where there is a preponderance of evidence that workplace bullying has occurred. The Fact-Finding Team, the Review Panel, the Vice Chancellors, and the Chancellor will be bound to make their
determinations based on this standard of proof.

III.L. Interim Measures
At any point during the review process, the Chancellor’s Office may order the imposition of interim measures deemed by them necessary for the protection of either of the parties. Such measures may include but not be limited to change in work assignment or location for the Complainant or Respondent.

IV. Retaliation

No individual shall be retaliated or discriminated against for participating in these procedures. Complaints of retaliation should be addressed to the Chancellor’s Office, who will determine the appropriate action.

V. Records

Records of all proceedings under Sections II-III will be kept by the Chancellor’s Office and may be accessible to authorized staff as necessary. For example, records may be accessed when determining an appropriate penalty for a subsequent workplace bullying complaint; when a complaint of retaliation is made; when a decision is reviewed; or when a Respondent is a candidate for a supervisory position.

The records will also be available to University Legal Counsel for any proceeding related to these policies or procedures, whether internal to the University or in any judicial or administrative proceeding in which the University, its trustees, officers, employees or agents are a party.

VI. Penalties

The penalties for those found to have violated this policy may include, but will not be limited to, any one or combination of the following: verbal admonition, written warning placed in the personnel file, probation, suspension without pay, demotion, removal from administrative duties, and dismissal. Any disciplinary measures imposed will be consistent with applicable union contractual provisions.

VII. Annual Report

At the end of every academic year the Chancellor’s Office will prepare an annual report of statistics and relevant commentary on all matters reviewed under the procedures described in Section II and Section III. The annual report will be available to faculty and staff members upon written request to the Chancellor’s Office. The annual report will not contain names, but may contain other relevant statistical data including, but not limited to, status of the parties (e.g., exempt or non-exempt staff; or faculty); department or other campus affiliation; nature of the complaint; and outcome, to the extent that it is possible to provide this information without compromising the confidentiality of the parties.