

BIAS SUPPORT SERVICES 2019-20 and 2020-21 Reports



Campus Life

Note: As a result of Emory's transition to mostly remote learning in spring 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, BSS combined reports for the 2019 and 2020 years.

OVERVIEW

Emory University's Bias Incident Response Team (BIRT) was developed from a recommendation in the 2013 Campus Life Compact. The online reporting system was launched during the 2013-14 academic year. During the 2019-20 academic year, BIRT transitioned to Bias Support Services (BSS), which now includes two processes: Bias Review and Bias Support.

Bias Review involves a team that reviews reports and other materials for potential violations of [federal](#) and/or [state](#) law, the [University's Equal Opportunity and Discriminatory Harassment Policy](#), or [Undergraduate Code of Conduct](#) violations. For information about graduate and professional student codes of conduct, please see each school's student handbook.

Bias Support offers resources designed to create a more inclusive campus community. The support team is comprised of staff trained to care for students through a trauma-informed lens and provide advocacy and support. If required, they can also work collaboratively with other Emory organizations to determine whether additional community intervention is needed to address student concerns and/or reported incidents.

Reports are submitted through the online reporting form and sent to BSS by Emory faculty or staff, or reported directly to the Office of Residence Life, Office of Student Conduct, or Office of Equity and Inclusion. The data does not reflect incidents reported directly to the Emory Police Department or other university department or division.

In 2019-20, only three complaints were received and the campus closed in March 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The three incidents involved racially insensitive comments made by one student during a freshman group chat, on Facebook, and during a Zoom meeting with other students.

In 2020-21, a total of 21 complaints were received, a decline compared to the pre-pandemic year of 2018-19. The drop may be due primarily to a substantially limited on-campus student population that school year due to the pandemic.

The incidents involved language that was hateful, hostile, bigoted, or reflected negative stereotyping. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, WeChat, and Group Me were the social media avenues used to disseminate the derogatory messages. In addition, a Zoom meeting was hacked during a Black Lives Matter event and resulted in offensive comments and names posted online.

These incidents occurred when racial tensions throughout the country were extremely high. Wide-spread protests were underway stemming from the George Floyd and Ahmaud Arbery killings, police reform was hotly debated, and controversial tweets were repeatedly posted by the then-President of the United States and others.

Month	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
August	0	0	1	0	1	0	0
September	1	1	2	0	7	0	0
October	4	2	1	6	1	0	0
November	3	0	3	3	2	0	0
December	1	2	0	0	2	0	0
January	2	1	1	3	4	0	0
February	2	2	2	1	0	0	0
March	3	12	3	1	0	0	0
April	3	3	2	2	24	0	0
May	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
June	0	0	0	0	0	3	0
May/June	0	0	0	0	0	0	21
Total	19	23	16	17	42	3	21

Note: The 2018-19 report recorded a mathematical error in the total number of incidents. The figure here is correct.

The Bias Support Services team identified several recommendations and next steps based on the data, feedback, and experiences from the last two years.

UPDATES ON PAST RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. **Past Recommendation:** Develop and implement strategies to educate students on the reporting process as well as other methods of resolving concerns on campus.

Update: BSS implemented training for Residence Life staff and students participating in undergraduate student orientation programs. Next steps include broader education for upper-class and graduate/professional students. This year BSS will enhance collaboration with Associate Deans in the schools to enhance education.
- II. **Past Recommendation:** Develop and implement strategies to educate faculty and staff on the purpose and function of the bias reporting system.

Update: BSS is collaborating with the Vice Provost for Faculty Affairs and the Vice Provost of Diversity and Inclusion and the Associate Deans in each of the schools to develop strategies to educate faculty and staff. In addition, Campus Life developed the Blue Folder resource, including a BSS overview and ways faculty, staff, and students can engage.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS

- I. Emory is engaged in a new strategic planning process under the leadership of the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI). BSS will continue to collaborate with the planning committee to determine ways to educate the community about BSS and to develop support mechanisms for community members who experience bias.
- II. Finalize the transition to using the case management software system to record bias incidents.

BSS website: <https://campuslife.emory.edu/about/initiatives/bias/index.html>