



# NSDA

## Belonging & Inclusion Station



# Development and Implementation Guide

**2023 NSDA DISTRICT & NATIONAL TOURNAMENTS**



Dear Tournament Leaders,

Thank you for implementing a Belonging and Inclusion Station (BIS) and/or serving as a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate at the NSDA district and national tournaments!

It is our privilege to provide students an opportunity to compete at the district and/or national levels. But it is our responsibility to provide everyone a tournament experience that is welcoming, safe, and free from harassment and discrimination. The NSDA is a multicultural organization that serves a diverse community. While we recognize that misunderstandings will occur from time to time, we also honor our core values and acknowledge that ensuring the safety of our students, coaches, judges, visitors, and friends is intrinsic to this organization.

Our Belonging and Inclusion Stations (as well as their predecessor, equity offices) are designed to give space to address violations of our harassment and discrimination policies, as well as provide participants with assurance that they can report incidents without the threat of retaliation. This guide provides an overview of the BIS along with guidelines and processes to utilize when implementing this very important resource.

If you have any questions about this document or the Belonging and Inclusion Station, please do not hesitate to contact Dr. Paul Porter, the NSDA's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, at [paul.porter@speechanddebate.org](mailto:paul.porter@speechanddebate.org).

All the best for a successful NSDA tournament experience!

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## The Belonging and Inclusion Station: At a Glance

This guide is quite extensive because of the critical nature of potential violations to our harassment and discrimination policy. It is important that you read the guide in its entirety. However, this section provides a brief snapshot of the entire BIS implementation process including what to do before, during, and after your tournament.

### *Before the Tournament*

- **Appoint a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate** to run the Belonging and Inclusion Station.
- **Publish information about the BIS.** Please include this in your tournament invitation.
- **Designate a private space for the BIS.** This is where inquiries will take place.
- Post signage about the BIS.
- Create an intake form.
- Share the BIS guide with your school administration and tournament leadership.
- **Check with school administration** to learn any variables that may influence corrective action.

### *During the Tournament*

- If someone brings a concern about a violation of the harassment and discrimination process, direct them to the BIS and have them speak with the BIA.
- **BIA asks the complainant to complete the intake form.** The BIA should do their best to make the complainant feel safe and heard during the intake process. It may be helpful (but not required) to consider inviting an additional adult into the room to help ease the situation. **The BIA must contact an adult to be present if the complainant is a student.**
- **BIA interviews any persons relevant to the reported complaint.**
- **BIA classifies behavior as a Level I, Level II, or Level III violation.**
  - **LEVEL I Intervention and Support** (Inappropriate behavior, but not considered to be egregious or in violation of NSDA Harassment and Discrimination policy or local/federal laws)
  - **LEVEL II One and Only Warning** (Egregious behavior, potentially in violation of NSDA Harassment and Discrimination policy, but not in violation of local/federal laws)
  - **LEVEL III Sanction** (Egregious behavior, clearly in violation of NSDA Harassment and Discrimination policy, and/or local/federal laws)
- **BIA determines and implements appropriate corrective action.**
  - **LEVEL I:** Teaching moment with respondent found in violation, verbal warning, and instruction on how to address behavior
  - **LEVEL II:** First and Final Warning (in writing) to respondent from the district chair, and instruction on how to address behavior
  - **LEVEL III:** District leadership and BIA consult with the national office on appropriate sanction and share the **appeal process** with the respondent. (Please see if other action is necessary according to administrative policies).

### *After the Tournament*

- If there is a Level III violation, **send a letter** to the respondent and their supervising adults and/or guardian. This may be necessary if a Level II violation has potential Title IX implications as well.
- Send a **Letter of Closure** to the complainant
- BIA completes **NSDA reporting form**.

## Why have a Belonging and Inclusion Station?

The NSDA district and national tournament series are a special experience for students, giving young people the opportunity to unleash their true potential. In order to reach their potential, participants (e.g., students, coaches, judges, and participants) deserve a caring and welcoming environment—one that fosters inclusion, affirms identity, celebrates lived experiences, and protects from harassment and discrimination. The Belonging and Inclusion Station (BIS) is a powerful step toward providing this kind of experience by helping address violations of your tournament’s harassment and discrimination policies. This document was created to make it easier to take this step to make your tournament better for students.

While there are many laws that protect student rights, there are many situations that fall in the “gray” area that problematize the speech and debate experience. The BIS is designed to help mitigate these situations by creating a safe space to report inappropriate and illegal behavior as well as speak with an adult about issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. **Note: Your administration and local authorities will guide you on which behavior is illegal and would need to be escalated to other authorities.**

In providing the Belonging and Inclusion Station and considering the corresponding questions in this document, we hope to enhance your tournament preparation by pointing attention to accessibility and equity issues, in addition to helping to protect participants from harassment and discrimination. Even if you believe that you have never had a harassment or discrimination issue previously, it is possible that individuals did not feel they had an avenue to share their concerns. If it has happened at one tournament, it could have happened at any of our tournaments. Having a Belonging and Inclusion Station is both a proactive and a reactive way to provide a safer and more equitable experience for participants.

This document offers guidance on selecting Belonging and Inclusion Advocates, questions to go over with your administrators, and lessons learned on the BIS process.

## What is a Belonging and Inclusion Station?

A Belonging and Inclusion Station is a space that individuals attending the tournament can come to bring concerns about violations of the NSDA’s harassment and discrimination policy. Although the BIS may answer some other questions, **it is not intended as a general information desk.** Some tournaments create separate information desks, sometimes called “Ombuds Rooms,” or other areas to answer questions about schedules, rules for events, ballots, etc. **The Belonging and Inclusion Station should also be separate from rules questions.** Complaints presented to the BIS specifically center around violations of discrimination or harassment, whereas rules protests are about the violation of competitive event rules (e.g., falsification of evidence, plagiarism, etc.). **These two areas and questions should be treated distinctly in terms of personnel and space.** For in-person competition, these spaces may be located near each other, but be mindful of privacy concerns. For online competition, these spaces are often two different Zoom rooms. Should you need to combine these spaces, please be sure to plan ahead with Zoom breakout rooms or other online spaces that would allow a sensitive conversation to occur in private.

Examples of issues that may be discussed in the Belonging and Inclusion Station:

- A student was frequently misgendered by a competitor
- An individual used offensive language about another individual
- An individual made inappropriate remarks or jokes about a traditionally marginalized groups

Examples of issues that would go to an Ombudsperson:

- An individual judge has not filled out a judge paradigm
- One style of debate has more elimination rounds than another style of debate
- There was a loud noise during a student’s performance, disrupting their performance

Of course, it may be occasionally unclear whether an issue is a rule or a BIS consideration. In those instances, advise the individual of the two spaces and ask which space they feel is correct for the issue in question. **In instances where a rule violation is adjacent to harassment and discrimination, the tournament director and BIS should work in tandem.** Minimize sending individuals back and forth between spaces as much as possible, but be sure to involve personnel from both spaces as needed.

## Questions to discuss with administrators

As soon as possible prior to the tournament, it is important to discuss a few key legal and ethical considerations with school administrations. This is not an exhaustive list, but a place to start.

### *Which harassment and discrimination policy should you use?*

For NSDA districts and the NSDA National Tournament, we will employ the National Speech & Debate Association’s **harassment and discrimination policy**:

*The National Speech & Debate Association is committed to providing its participants, judges, coaches, and staff the opportunity to pursue excellence in their endeavors. This opportunity can exist only when each member of our community is assured an atmosphere of mutual respect. The NSDA prohibits all forms of harassment and discrimination. Accordingly, all forms of harassment and discrimination, whether written or oral, based on race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law are prohibited, whether committed by participants, judges, coaches, or observers. Individuals who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises.*

— Approved by the NSDA Board of Directors on December 13, 2018

**Disclaimer:** Individual school district policies may vary. This policy is not intended to replace established school district procedures. **If you adopt this policy, please be sure to include the policy of the host school district as well.**

Prior to the National Tournament, the NSDA will speak with tournament host school administration to know if they have a harassment and discrimination policy that the tournament should follow as well. Communication with the school district of a district tournament host is also encouraged.

Be sure to include any harassment and discrimination policies (including the Association’s) in your tournament invitation. You may also want to consider effective means of ensuring that potential and current participants (teachers, students, judges, observers, volunteers, etc) are well aware of your harassment and discrimination policy and the existence of your BIS.

### *Elevating BIS actions to administration*

**Note:** *The BIS is a resource designed to levy corrective action for violations of harassment and discrimination policies at NSDA district and national tournaments. This does not preclude additional inquiries and/or corrective actions. You may want to consider providing documentation of violations to the respondent's school principal or school district—especially if the violation carries Title IX implications.*

Please consider providing contact information for Belonging and Inclusion Advocates to call for those situations, and reviewing your local and state guidelines and policies. You may also find this [2019 report on State Statutes about Mandatory Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect](#) helpful.

As you gain clarity on these situations, consider making as much of this information as transparent as possible along with your intake forms, Belonging and Inclusion Station signage, and communication to coaches and students. Please also review with your administration what elements of privacy you and your Belonging and Inclusion Advocate should respect. Generally speaking, the BIS should strive for maintaining as much confidentiality as is reasonable while balancing the privacy of the participants and the legal requirements for reporting.

## Who is in your Belonging and Inclusion Station?

Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are a distinct set of people who will be your partner in issues addressing equity, which can include violations of your harassment and discrimination policy. **Belonging and Inclusion Advocates (formerly known as Equity Officers) are individuals who should be distinct from individuals with other roles at your tournament. In other words, to the highest degree possible, these individuals should not also be judges, tournament directors, tab room staff, etc.**

Depending on the size and complexity of your tournament, you may want several Belonging and Inclusion Advocates. In general, we recommend that you try to have at least one individual available— either on site or on call. In the event of an escalating situation, you also have the option of contacting the national office for additional resource and support. Chances are, you already have a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate in your district, as providing a tournament contact for people to go to for help is commonplace at tournaments.

**Please note: Any resources you can implement to ensure a tournament environment free from harassment and discrimination is advantageous. Please do not let any perceived obstacles to offering all of the resources listed deter you from implementing a Belonging and Inclusion Station.**

If you would like to have a BIA, but do not have a person to serve in this role, please know that the NSDA will offer training sessions throughout the year for any person interested in becoming a BIA.

At the National Speech & Debate Tournament, Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are chosen based on previous experience with issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in relation to human resources or education settings. They are also chosen to reflect the diversity of our student population. You may wish to speak with your school district about the availability of school counselors, human resource professionals, and diversity, equity, and inclusion professionals. We pair individuals with complementary skill sets and, whenever possible, try to have Belonging and Inclusion Advocates work together as a team to ensure multiple perspectives are heeded.

In choosing the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate for your district tournament, keep in mind that you are trying to create a team of individuals well suited to address concerns brought to your office. As such, you might want to try and include individuals with several of the below qualifications or characteristics:

- Prior speech and debate experience
- Ability to gain the trust of the speech and debate community
- Committed to a safe and equitable environment
- Skilled at deescalation
- Trained on cultural competence and sensitivity
- Trained on harassment and discrimination, especially in the context of adolescent school environments
- Prior experience working with K-12 students and educators
- Experience with counseling or trauma-informed teaching practices
- Understanding and experience with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)
- Experience as a **Title IX investigator**
- Experience in human resources
- Empathy, empathy, and more empathy

You may want to consider inviting a building or central office administrator to serve as one of your Belonging and Inclusion Advocates, both to help with legal/policy coordination and to help them learn more about the activity firsthand.

If possible, select your core Belonging and Inclusion Advocates as soon as possible, **ideally no later than one month before your competition**. If you are selecting a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate for an NSDA district tournament, please make sure they complete the virtual BIA certification training. Please equip your Belonging and Inclusion Advocates with the appropriate legal and process expectations required by your administration and applicable laws. You should consider yourself and your Belonging and Inclusion Advocates mandatory reporters, which requires knowledge of the applicable expectations.

## What should you discuss with your Belonging and Inclusion Advocate before your tournament?

Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are your partner in providing a safer and more equitable tournament experience. Although they are experts in their fields, as the tournament director, the final decision on a corrective course of action comes to you.

A complete list of questions and considerations for providing a more inclusive and equitable speech and debate tournament can be found in the **NSDA's Inclusive Tournament checklist**, updated annually and as needed.

Prior to the tournament, and if at all possible prior to posting your invitation, you may wish to speak to your Belonging and Inclusion Advocates about the following items:

- The NSDA's (and the district tournament host school's) harassment and discrimination policy and where to publish this to allow competitors, judges, and coaches to know of its existence.
- Publishing your full BIS team, including their pictures and short biographies.
- The exact process you want the Belonging and Inclusion Advocates to follow, including how reports are made, how to handle various types of incidents, when and to whom they should inform the end result, your expectation of confidentiality, etc.



## How should you let attendees know about the existence of the Belonging and Inclusion Station?

It is important for all attendees to know about the existence of the Belonging and Inclusion Station. Often with tournament communications, our expectation is that the coach shares all details with students, judges, other coaches, and any observers. Although coaches are great at communicating a lot of details to these wide audiences, details can get lost in translation. Please consider ways that you can help the coach by also communicating about the BIS in a way that is easy for a coach to forward and/or for other audiences to see the information directly.

### *Tournament Invitation*

Your tournament invitation is the first sign of your commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging at your tournament. It is also often referenced by more than just coaches. Possible language you could modify for your invitation:

*The [Name] Tournament is committed to providing a safer and more equitable speech and debate competition. In order to do so, we ask that all attendees be aware of and follow our harassment and discrimination policy.*

*[insert your policy language]*

*Violations of the harassment and discrimination policy may be brought to the attention of our Belonging and Inclusion Advocate. For full details on bios and procedures, please visit [URL/location].*

You might also consider creating a dedicated section on Tabroom.com or other online tournament registration systems. This dedicated section could include the names of your Belonging and Inclusion Advocates, their bios and pictures, and details about how to get in touch with your BIS during the tournament.

### *Dedicated Email*

Creating a dedicated email to coaches announcing the BIS will make sure this message doesn't get lost in the many other important details about your tournament. A dedicated email is also easy for a coach to forward to their students and judges.

Possible text you could modify for an email to all attendees prior to the start of your tournament:

*Subject Line: Staying Safe at [Name] Tournament*

*The [Name] Tournament is committed to providing a safer and more equitable speech and debate competition. In order to do so, we ask that all attendees be aware of and follow our harassment and discrimination policy.*

*[insert your policy language]*

*Belonging and Inclusion Advocates provide a first point of contact for attendees with inquiries related to harassment and discrimination at the tournament. If you have a concern about how people are treating*

you that you want to make known to the **[Name] Tournament** and, if appropriate, legal authorities, or you have witnessed behavior that is inconsistent with our Harassment and Discrimination Policy, please visit **[URL/location]**. You will be asked to fill out a form sharing your information and describing the violation. You will then discuss the grievance informally and on a verbal basis with the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate, who shall in turn look into the complaint.

### **Social Media Post**

If your tournament has a social media presence, you may also want to communicate this information through social media. Possible text you could modify for that social media message:

We want everyone to be as safe and informed as possible at our tournament this week! Read up on our communication methods and our Belonging and Inclusion Advocates. **[link to section of Tabroom.com with information]**

## **Where is your Belonging and Inclusion Station?**

### **For in-person competition**

Consider whether you have the space and staffing to have an in-person Belonging and Inclusion Station. While not necessary, it can be nice for tournament participants to have an advocate to speak with in person.

If your BIS is in person, Belonging and Inclusion Advocates should be given a private space with at least one additional room for conversations in case multiple equity concerns occur simultaneously. This space should be found near your main information desk and in a convenient space for competitors. You may wish to create signage about the BIS and Belonging and Inclusion Advocates so that participants can access this information as they navigate the tournament.

If your BIS is online for an in-person event, ensure that you have published how attendees get in touch with the BIA. Consider having an in-person intake station where participants can come to share that they plan to report a violation. Having an in-person intake station can help make participants feel safe and heard. This intake station, whether it's the tournament help desk, tab room, or administrator in a front office, can help connect the participant with the online BIA and provide a private room for them to have the online conversation.

### **For online competition**

For an online Belonging and Inclusion Station at an online tournament, it is recommended that you have an easily accessible room that is available to coaches, judges, and students and can be widely shared. This room could be a Zoom link, NSDA Campus, or Google Meet room.

It is advantageous for you to have a BIA who can be readily accessible to all participants for the duration of your event. If your tournament is using Tabroom.com, consider creating a utility room at **Paneling » Rooms » Utility** for your BIS. The utility room can utilize a Zoom link or create a dedicated NSDA Campus room for the BIS, and the video icon taking tournament participants directly to the BIS will automatically appear at the top of all participants'

Tabroom.com accounts for the duration of your event. Your BIA can wait in that room to assist participants with the intake form and inform them of next steps.

Since the BIS room is accessible to all participants, please make sure you have a way to move individuals to private rooms so others do not inadvertently join. If you're using Zoom, breakout rooms are great for private conversations, or you can enable the waiting room function to control when participants are able to enter the main room.

**If it is not possible to have a person dedicated only to the BIS, you may have an on-call BIA who is ready to join an online room when an issue arises.** Make sure you communicate to participants the best way to reach the tournament about a violation (e.g., texting a general helpline, emailing the tab room, joining a Zoom help room, etc.) so that the BIA can be called in when needed. Be sure to have a dedicated online room ready for the complainant and BIA to have a private conversation, and ensure that a link to that room can easily be shared with any other adults who need to be included in the conversation.

## BIS Intake Process

The following process will be employed whenever a complainant visits the BIS.

**Note:** *This section outlines the process for intake, inquiry, and resolution used for BIS at NSDA district and national tournaments. Other tournaments are encouraged to adopt or adjust this model to suit their needs. Please refer to your school district administration regarding appropriate actions in response to harassment and discrimination violations.*

### **Step 1. Intake**

Belonging and Inclusion Stations should be easy to find and easily accessible.

When an attendee comes to the BIS, ask them to complete the intake form. **The intake form** asks for identifying information, coach contact information, a description of the violation of the harassment and discrimination policy, and whether there is a parent, guardian, coach, or other adult they would like contacted about the situation. The intake form describes that a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate will conduct an informal discussion about the reported incident, gather information about allegations, and provide the complainant with a conclusion of the findings and applicable resolutions.

**Note:** *Should a Belonging and Inclusion Advocate want to report observations, yet not be involved, it is important that they still provide a report of the violation. As long as the complaint is detailed, the NSDA should be able to investigate the violation.*

**Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are mandatory reporters.** In your intake form, signage for the room, and other communications, please be sure to explain that the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate will keep information as confidential as possible, but ethically and legally, Advocates are required to notify authorities if there is a report of behavior that presents clear and imminent danger to themselves or others, if there is a case of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, or in the case of known or suspected sexual violence. It is important that your tournament's Belonging and Inclusion Advocates understand their legal and ethical obligations under the law, and it is also important that any potential course of action is made clear to the person filling out the form so they know what actions may occur because of reporting their concern.

Other tournaments have provided additional intake options. For example, participants have the option to request a student advocate (an alum at a university who speaks with them first) prior to engaging the BIS. Other tournaments provide all participants with access to the online form and have that online interaction serve as the first place of contact. Regardless of the options for intake or initial process, your process should include some advance planning for the next step after the initial BIS request has been made.

The NSDA also strives to have Belonging and Inclusion Advocates approach a situation in pairs so there are at least two members of the tournament staff in the room (virtual or in-person) when discussing the situation.

Furthermore, if a student comes forward with a harassment or discrimination concern, the NSDA process includes asking the student what adult they would like to join them as a student advocate or support. Even if the student is 18 years old, pausing the conversation to be sure that they have a moment to gather an additional person to be a support or further advocate in the situation can be beneficial for the student.

### *Step 2. Inquiry*

After receiving the intake form, the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate available at that time confers to determine which Belonging and Inclusion Advocate(s) are most appropriate to take the lead in conducting the inquiry. Tournament directors are kept apprised of all new reports. **Belonging and Inclusion Advocates seek for all conversations with a student to have a supervising adult present.** Students are asked if they feel comfortable with their supervising adult being contacted.

**Note:** *If the violation is made by the tournament director, the complainant should contact the NSDA staff, who would then identify someone from the tournament committee (from an unaffiliated school) to run the inquiry.*

**Note:** *If the student is not comfortable, if the report concerns actions by their supervising adult, or if the supervising adult is unreachable, the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate contacts a parent or guardian. Parents/guardians are given the option to have the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate inform the supervising adult at the tournament of the situation. This is the case for any contact that the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate has with a student, whether that student is the complainant, a witness to the allegation, or the alleged offender.*

**Note:** *Belonging and Inclusion Advocates **should not be witnesses.** Should a BIA witness a violation, they should report it to the tournament office and not act in the capacity as a BIA.*

Belonging and Inclusion Advocates speak to the complainant and their supervising adult and then work to contact any available witnesses privately to discuss the allegation. If applicable, the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate also conducts meetings with the respondent separately and privately.

A few considerations for conducting inquiries:

1. Given conversations with your administration or district, who and how should inquiries occur?
2. Have you made it clear to complainants early on what the process will look like and what kinds of situations may trigger mandatory reporting or calls to the appropriate authorities?
3. Preponderance of the Evidence: This is when all evidence collected (witness statements, text messages, emails, photos, video surveillance, audio surveillance, etc.) and reviewed indicates it is more than 50% likely the alleged misconduct took place. This does not mean there is direct evidence *proving* the complaint, but that evidence indicates it is *more likely than not* the complaint is true.

### **Step 3. Resolution**

After gathering information from all parties and witnesses, the Belonging and Inclusion Advocates use a three-level framework to determine an appropriate course of action depending on the circumstances. Depending on the procedure decided upon prior to the tournament, Belonging and Inclusion Advocates will share with the decision maker, potentially the tournament director. The three tiers are as follows:

**LEVEL I** – Behavior not considered to be egregious or in violation of NSDA Code of Conduct or local/federal laws

#### **Verbal Warning with Intervention and Complainant Support**

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** – The BIA and/or NSDA district leader offers support to the complainant. The respondent receives a verbal warning and is instructed on how to address the behavior and ensure that it does not happen again.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** – The BIAs and/or NSDA Director of DEI offer support to the complainant. The respondent receives a verbal warning and is instructed on how to address the behavior and ensure that it does not happen again.

**LEVEL II** – Behavior, potentially in violation of NSDA Code of Conduct, but not in violation of local/federal laws; repeated Level I violation

#### **One and Only Warning – Written**

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA district leader and/or NSDA Director of DEI issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA Director of DEI and/or Executive Director issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.

**Note:** *If a Level II violation has potential Title IX implications (e.g. could be perceived as sexual harassment or hostile environment), a letter will be sent to the respondent and their guardian, and/or supervisor.*

**LEVEL III** – Behavior, clearly in violation of NSDA Code of Conduct and/or local/federal laws; repeated Level I or Level II violations

#### **Sanction**

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** – The district leader consults with the national office on appropriate sanction.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA Executive Director and/or NSDA Board members will provide sanction to the respondent. (If at the district tournament, district leaders will consult the national office before making a decision on sanction.)

**Note:** *As written in the NSDA harassment/discrimination policy, “Individuals who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises.”*

**Note:** *Anything that affects administrative action regarding the tournament should be signed off on by the tournament director. All parties should be notified of the approved action step.*

The Belonging and Inclusion Advocate shall not discuss general or specific details of any complaints with anyone other than the parties involved and the tournament director or designated individuals. For privacy concerns, even discussing situations without mentioning names might violate the privacy of individuals.

If the administrative action is approved, the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate might communicate the decision to the respondent and their supervising adults and/or guardian. It is advised to discuss in advance who would best deliver this information and in what form (phone call, written, etc).

**Notification to participating parties is the final step in the intake process.** Closing the loop in whatever way is possible allows people to know that the situation was taken seriously and addressed, even if they cannot know the end resolution in detail. In the case of a Level II violation with Title IX implications, or a Level III violation, the BIA should send a *letter to the complainant, informing them that the tournament's intake process is closed.*

LEVEL	EXAMPLE OF VIOLATION	COURSE OF ACTION DISTRICT TOURNAMENT	COURSE OF ACTION NATIONAL TOURNAMENT
<b>Level I – Intervention and Complainant Support</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inappropriate comments or jokes of a racist, sexist, homophobic, etc. nature</li> <li>• Potentially inappropriate language based on an understanding of what is culturally appropriate or a norm for one area vs another. For example, someone referring to another individual as a “sweetie” saying that it is the norm in their area.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with BIA and/or NSDA district leader</li> <li>• Verbal warning</li> <li>• Instruction on how to address behavior and prevent repeat behavior</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with the BIA and/or NSDA Director of DEI</li> <li>• Verbal warning</li> <li>• Instruction on how to address behavior and prevent repeat behavior</li> </ul>
<b>Level II – One and Only Warning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived inappropriate contact or communication from a judge or coach to another tournament participant. This contact might be email outreach, private message through social media prior to or during the tournament, etc.</li> <li>• Repeated Level I violations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First and Final Warning from NSDA district leader</li> <li>• Letter to respondent’s guardian and/or supervisor (if there are potential Title IX implications)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First and Final Warning from the NSDA Director of DEI and/or Executive Director</li> <li>• Letter to respondent’s guardian and/or supervisor (if there are potential Title IX implications)</li> </ul>
<b>Level III – Sanction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sexual harassment or assault</li> <li>• Physical violence against another tournament participant</li> <li>• Repeated Level I or Level II violations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• District leader consults with the national office on appropriate sanction</li> <li>• Letter to respondent’s guardian and/or supervisor</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sanction from NSDA Executive Director and/or Board of Directors</li> <li>• Letter to respondent’s guardian and/or supervisor</li> </ul>

**Note:** In the event of sexual assault or violence, the BIA should contact law enforcement immediately.

#### *Step 4. Appeal*

Should a respondent disagree with the proposed course of action, they may request an appeal.

- If the appeal involves a decision made prior to the NSDA tournament, the appeal must be communicated to the NSDA national office in writing (including virtually) promptly. The NSDA will render a decision within a reasonable time frame.
- If the appeal involves a decision made during the NSDA tournament, the appeal must be communicated to the NSDA national office in writing (including virtually) promptly. The NSDA will render a decision within a reasonable time frame.

**Note:** *The NSDA's decision shall be final. Any reported behavior taking place prior to the NSDA tournament will be considered should additional complaints be received about the respondent at the NSDA tournament.*

**Note:** *The BIS is a resource designed to levy corrective action for violations of harassment and discrimination policies at your tournament. **This does not preclude additional inquiries and/or corrective actions. You may want to consider providing documentation of violations to the respondent's school principal or school district—especially if the violation carries Title IX implications.***

## Related Definitions

It is important to understand some basic terms related to harassment and discrimination. These terms can help describe the nature of an incident, as well as consider when determining an appropriate course of action.

**ACCESSIBILITY:** The degree to which a product, device, service, environment, or facility is usable by as many people as possible, including by persons with disabilities

**BIAS:** A conscious or unconscious tendency or inclination that results in judgment without question.

**BIAS INCIDENT:** An act of prejudice against an individual or groups in which there is evidence that the target or victim was chosen on the basis of (but not limited to) race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law. Examples may include, but not limited to vandalism to personal or school property, intimidating comments or messages, defacement of posters or signs.

**COMPLAINANT:** An individual who is alleged to be the victim of conduct that could constitute sexual harassment.

**Note:** *Parents and guardians who have a legal right to act on behalf of parties may do so, including by filing formal complaints.*

**DISCRIMINATION:** Treatment of a person (favorably or less favorably) than another person or persons based on characteristics including, but not limited to race, color, religion, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, citizenship, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by any applicable federal, state, or local law.



**EQUITY:** Shared commitment to operational processes, practices and spaces that affirm identity, promote inclusion, and ensure the conditions of fairness in our organization.

**HARASSMENT (OR UNWELCOME CONDUCT):** Unwelcome conduct determined by a reasonable person to be so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively denies a person equal access to the recipient’s participation at the district and/or national tournament (e.g., name-calling, graphic or written statements—including the use of cell phones or the internet, conduct that may be physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating).

Types of harassment include:

**Bullying:** Unwanted, aggressive behavior involving a real or perceived power imbalance that is repeated or has the potential to be repeated. Types of bullying include:

- **VERBAL:** Teasing, name-calling, inappropriate sexual comments, taunting, threatening to cause harm.
- **SOCIAL:** Leaving someone out on purpose, telling others to not befriend someone, spreading rumors about someone, embarrassing someone in public
- **PHYSICAL:** Hitting/kicking/pinching, spitting, tipping/pushing, taking or breaking someone’s things, making mean or rude hand gestures
- **CYBER:** Bullying that takes place over digital devices like cell phones, computers, and tablets. Cyberbullying can occur through SMS, text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content. Cyberbullying includes sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else. It can include sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation. Some cyberbullying crosses the line into unlawful or criminal behavior.

*(Source: United States Dept. of Health & Human Services – stopbullying.gov)*

**Gender-Based Harassment:** Unwelcome conduct of a nonsexual nature based on a student’s sex, including conduct based on gender identity, gender expression, and nonconformity with gender stereotypes.

**Hostile Environment:** Behavior, comments, and/or actions that are so pervasive that it denies an individual’s ability to participate in or benefit from the organization’s programs or activities. A hostile environment can be created by anyone involved in an organization-sponsored program or activity (e.g., administrators, students, and visitors).

**Retaliation:** Action taken by an accused individual, or an action taken by a third party against any person that has opposed any practices forbidden under this policy or because that person has filed a complaint, testified, assisted, or participated in any manner in an intake or proceeding under this policy. Action is generally deemed retaliatory if it would deter a reasonable person in the same circumstances from opposing practices prohibited by this policy.

**Sexual Harassment:** Unwanted conduct of a sexual nature. Examples include: Unwelcomed sexual behavior, advances, or requests for favors; unwelcomed verbal, visual, or physical sexual conduct; offensive, severe, and/or frequent remarks about a person's sex; harassment of a sexual nature which interferes with an individual's right to an education and participation in a program or activity.

## Common situations in the Belonging and Inclusion Station

The following are some possible situations to consider and discuss prior to the tournament.

**Note:** These situations are triaged by levels listed in the previous course of action section. Discuss with your BIS team and administration what may be the range of actions or remedies taken for these situations. As individual circumstances arise, you will tailor your responses, but this will help you and your team be more prepared. When considering these situations, please discuss how you might handle the situation if the alleged behavior is from a student, a judge, an observer (student or coach), etc.

### LEVEL I

- An individual in a round spoke or behaved in an inappropriate manner. Examples of this may be comments made before, during, or after the round perceived as condescending, dismissive, aggressive, or otherwise rooted in sexism, racism, or other structural inequities. These situations might include instances like one team mumbling during an opponent's prep time, making an inappropriate gesture during a speech, or disrespecting their opponent in other ways. When considering these situations, please discuss how you might handle the situation if the alleged behavior is from a student, a judge, an observer (student or coach), etc.
- A variety of possible judge comments on ballots or in post round feedback, including whether a topic has been overdone, even though it might be avante garde in a particular region or to that student.
- Potentially inappropriate language based on an understanding of what is culturally appropriate or a norm for one area vs another. For example, someone referring to another individual as a "sweetie" saying that it is the norm in their area. Another example could be suggesting an individual was too aggressive about a point and that tone policing is being applied in inequitable ways.
- Instances of perceived intentional or unintentional but consistent misgendering of an individual.

### LEVEL II

- Individuals outside of the context of a competition round yelling or behaving in a potentially aggressive manner in a public setting. Again, consider the possible roles that may cause you to consider this situation in different lights.
- Perceived inappropriate contact or communication from a judge or coach to another tournament participant. This contact might be email outreach, private message through social media prior to or during the tournament, etc.

### LEVEL III

- Sexual harassment or assault.
- Physical violence against another tournament participant.
- Intentional use of discriminatory language with the intent to bully, threaten, or intimidate

This list is not meant to be exhaustive of the instances that may come to your Belonging and Inclusion Station, but rather a source of potential discussions in advance to prepare for possible conflict resolution and reactions. If you

have questions about a corrective course of action before making a final decision, please feel free to contact the national office.

In some instances, the BIS may simply be a space for an individual to discuss broader societal questions or concerns they have. Although no action step may come from those conversations, those discussions can be just as important for participants.

The BIS is often a *reactive* way to address equity concerns at a speech and debate competition. A well prepared and equipped BIS can help to provide a supportive environment for students to feel safe being advocates for themselves. However, it also is important to discuss ways that your tournament can address harassment and in a proactive manner. In addition to sharing and conducting *judge training* that includes a cultural competency component for *all* judges, please consider discussing the prompts in the *NSDA's Inclusive Tournament checklist* for additional steps to create a safer and more equitable speech and debate experience.

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## Appendices

### *Appendix A – District & National Tournament Intake Form*

**NSDA BELONGING & INCLUSION STATION  
INTAKE FORM  
DISTRICT & NATIONAL TOURNAMENT– 2023**

*Any person who believes that they have experienced behavior in violation of the National Speech & Debate Association **Harassment and Discrimination Policy** or relevant tenets of the Code of Honor or Coaches Code of Ethics may complete this form to report the violation.*

*After completing the form, the person who believes they have a valid concern should talk with the Belonging and Inclusion Advocate, who will collect information from involved parties and recommend a corrective course of action.*

*Belonging and Inclusion Advocates will keep the information disclosed as confidential as possible. Ethically, Belonging and Inclusion Advocates are required to take appropriate action and notify authorities if students engage in behavior that presents clear and imminent danger to themselves or others, in the case of known or suspected child abuse or neglect, or in the case of known or suspected sexual violence.*

<b>Tournament Name</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Belonging &amp; Inclusion Advocate</b>
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Complainant's Contact Information

- Name
- Phone Number
- Email

Complainant's School Affiliation

- Complainant's Role at the Tournament (Coach, Judge, Student, Other)
- Complainant's Coach
- Nature of the Incident
- Involved Persons
- Any parent, guardian, coach, or adult who should be contacted about the incident

Summary of Complaint:

## Appendix B – First and Final Written Warning Letter

(Used for all Level II violations)

[Date]

Dear [name of respondent]

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that you have been found in violation of the National Speech & Debate Association **Harassment and Discrimination policy** at the [Name of Tournament].

On [date], a concern was reported to our Belonging and Inclusion Station by a [student/coach/judge– do not mention them by name] regarding [redacted]. The complainant reported [sentence summary of the concern here]. After our inquiry, including Interviews with you, the complainant, and [mention if there were any witnesses– do not mention them by name], we have determined that the incident was a **Level II** violation. According to the **NSDA Belonging and Inclusion Station Guide**, a violation of this kind applies to behavior perceived as potentially in violation of the NSDA Harassment and Discrimination Policy, but not state/federal law, and carries the following corrective action:

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** The NSDA district leader and/or NSDA Director of DEI issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** The NSDA Director of DEI and/or Executive Director issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.

**This letter is a first and final warning.** In accordance with the Harassment and Discrimination Policy, violations of this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises and/or future NSDA-sponsored events.

Should you disagree with this decision, you may request an appeal. Please communicate your appeal to the national office in writing (including virtually) promptly. A decision in response will be rendered within a reasonable time frame.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

[Name of Tournament Official]

Cc (in the event of Title IX implications) [If the respondent is a student and a minor: cc their guardian and coach  
If the respondent is a student and NOT a minor: cc their coach  
If the respondent is a coach: cc their supervisor (e.g. principal)  
If the respondent is an assistant coach or judge: cc the head coach]

## Appendix C – Sanction Letter

(Used for all Level III violations and Level II violations with Title IX implications)

[Date]

Dear [name of respondent],

This letter is to inform you that you have been found in violation of the National Speech & Debate Association’s **Harassment and Discrimination policy** at the [name of tournament].

On [date], a concern was reported to our Belonging and Inclusion Station by a [student/coach/judge–Please put category, not name]. The complainant reported [sentence summary of the concern here]. Our Belonging and Inclusion Advocate collected information by speaking with the complainant, and [mention if there were any witnesses– do not mention them by name]. Upon review, it was determined that the incident was a [Level II violation (with Title IX implications or Level III violation)]. According to the **NSDA Belonging and Inclusion Station Guide**, a violation of this kind carries the following corrective action from the tournament:

**LEVEL II** – Behavior, potentially in violation of NSDA Code of Conduct, but not in violation of local/federal laws; repeated Level I violation

### One and Only Warning – Written

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA district leader and/or NSDA Director of DEI issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA Director of DEI and/or Executive Director issues a written first and final warning to the respondent.

**LEVEL III** – Behavior, clearly in violation of NSDA Code of Conduct and/or local/federal laws; repeated Level I or Level II violations

### Sanction

- **DISTRICT TOURNAMENT** – The district leader consults with the national office on appropriate sanction.
- **NATIONAL TOURNAMENT** – The NSDA Executive Director and/or NSDA Board members will provide sanction to the respondent. (If at the district tournament, district Leaders will consult the national office before making a decision on sanction.)

**Note:** As written in the NSDA harassment/discrimination policy, “Individuals who are found to have violated this policy will be subject to the full range of sanctions, up to and including removal from the tournament premises.”

**Note:** Anything that affects administrative action regarding the tournament should be signed off on by the tournament director. All parties should be notified of the approved action step.

In response to this violation, the following actions were taken [provide a summary of the corrective actions presented and any follow-up actions proposed].

Should you disagree with this decision, you may request an appeal. Please communicate your appeal to the national office in writing (including virtually) promptly. A decision in response will be rendered within a reasonable time frame.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

*[name of tournament official]*

Cc: *[If the respondent is a student and a minor: cc their guardian and coach  
If the respondent is a student and NOT a minor: cc their coach  
If the respondent is a coach: cc their supervisor (e.g. principal)  
If the respondent is an assistant coach or judge: cc the head coach]*

## ***Appendix D- Letter of Closure***

Dear *[name of complainant]*

Thank you for bringing your concern to the NSDA Belonging and Inclusion Station. Per our conversation, based on our evidence, we found that the respondent *[select one: was or was not]* in violation of the NSDA Harassment and Discrimination policy, as *[select one: we could not substantiate the allegations presented or we were able to substantiate the allegations, but they did not rise to the level of a policy violation]. and disciplinary actions [indicate were or were not]* taken as a result.

Thank you again for bringing your concerns to our attention. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

*[name of tournament official]*



*Appendix E – Belonging and Inclusion Station Sign*

Please enlarge, copy, paste, print, and post:

