

# Duke Values



## Case Study: Hotline Abuse

*“Hotline Abuse” is a fictional story about a person involved in a real-life situation. This story helps illustrate when to report concerns using the speak-up resources.*

## Hotline Abuse

After Rick had been on the job for three years, his supervisor, Stu, approached him about upgrading his position by taking on more responsibility. Stu explained that Rick would be given some additional training to prepare him for his new duties. Although he wasn't sure exactly what would be required of him, Rick agreed with the plan. He trusted Stu and signed off on the new job description after a cursory review. He attended a week-long training class but, to his dismay, found much of the training to be over his head. He was required to read lengthy cases and reports, and the trainer spoke in technical lingo he wasn't familiar with. When he returned to work, he quickly discovered that Stu also expected him to do much more than usual each day as a result of the advanced training he had received.

“That class was really tough,” he told Stu. “It seems like I have to work a lot harder around here than I used to. It's almost as if you like to see me squirm.”

Stu laughed. Then he got serious. “I know the transition is challenging,” he said. “I've been there myself. But this work is in your job description and you agreed to get tracked and trained for it. I'm sorry, Rick, but you have attended the training program that prepares employees for this level of work. Now you just need to focus on your work, step up, or your next review isn't going to be what you're hoping for.”

Later that day Rick's co-worker, Justin, invited him to go out for an off-site lunch, but Rick said that he had to work. “I'm stressed to the max,” he said. “I mean, I had to go to that training and now I have to do all this extra work on top of what I normally do. I'd like to have dinner with my wife for once. I have half a mind to call the hotline. You know, it feels like harassment and I think Stu has it in for me. He is singling me out. He wants me to fail.”

“Don't call the hotline, Rick,” said Justin. “Just go talk to him.”

## Our shared values are more than aspirations...

They are the beliefs and behaviors that we expect of ourselves and our colleagues. They are the ideals that we must uphold in order to earn and maintain our reputation for quality and integrity, and to inspire confidence with each other and the world which we both serve and rely on for our future viability.

## Trust

We are honest, credible and reliable in our words, behaviors and actions.

## Living our Values

As stewards of Duke's trust, we are accountable. We avoid activities, pursuits or financial interests that are not compatible, in reality or perception, with our responsibilities.

We seek advice when expectations are not clear or when we question what is "right." We are vigilant in our intentions, leading by example and considering the implications of our actions.



"I have, and he pretty much told me to get back to work and stop complaining," said Rick.

"Well, then maybe that's what you need to do," said Justin.

Feeling pressured and unhappy, and getting farther and farther behind, Rick called the Speak-up Hotline and filed a complaint against his supervisor for harassment.

The complaint was promptly investigated by Staff and Labor Relations, with assistance from the Office for Institutional Equity. Darlene interviewed Rick and Stu, taking both of their viewpoints into account in order to form a clear idea of the situation.

"What is behind your allegation of harassment?" Darlene asked Rick.

"The guy's clearly got it in for me," he said. "First I had to attend a brain-busting training for a week. Then since I've been back he's been dumping all this new work on me, on top of my normal tasks. He's taking advantage of me, using his power over me just to see if I can handle the pressure."

Darlene then spoke to Stu, who explained that Rick had agreed to be trained for and take on additional job duties and received a raise

commensurate to the additional work load, but was struggling to keep up. It quickly became clear to Darlene that Rick's claims of harassment were not supported. She explained the seriousness of Rick's allegations to him.

"It's important to report any suspected wrongdoing, but it's not acceptable to exaggerate stories about another person because of your own job stress," she said. "Accusing your supervisor of harassment could ruin his reputation."

"I thought that's what the hotline was for," Rick said.

"No, the hotline is for asking for help or clarification on ethics issues and for legitimate complaints about wrongdoing that are made in good faith. Your complaint is really about your own job performance. I can help you by setting up a formal meeting between HR, Stu, and you to help facilitate a discussion.

That evening Rick shared the story with his wife.

"I think you lucked out," she said. "You're very fortunate Darlene offered to help by setting up time to talk with Stu. I really appreciate what this raise will mean to the family. You'll catch on to all of it soon."



## What would you do?

### Q: Did Rick use the hotline appropriately?

A: No. Rather than using the hotline to report a legitimate case of harassment, discrimination or legal/ethical wrongdoing, he used it as a means to complain about his new job responsibilities and his supervisor's expectations.

### Q: What could he have done instead?

A: As soon as he realized that he didn't understand the training, Rick should have gone to his supervisor to request additional training, mentoring or coaching in order to be able to handle his additional duties. He also could have changed his perspective on the situation: instead of seeing his supervisor as an adversary, he could have looked at him as a resource.

### Q: What can Rick do now to improve the situation?

A: Rick must make every effort to re-establish trust, to learn what he needs to in order to perform his job effectively, and to demonstrate his ability to handle all of the new responsibilities of his position.

### Q: Does Stu have a right to retaliate against Rick for what he did?

A: No. Although he has a reason to feel angry or resentful toward Rick, Stu does not have a right to retaliate against his employee. Stu needs to show the utmost professionalism and ethical leadership. He should discuss the best approach with his own manager or with HR.

## Duke Values

### RESPECT

We are a community of leaders, students, scholars, health care providers and staff who affirm and encourage open expression, academic freedom, regard for others and respect for laws and regulations.

### TRUST

We are honest, credible and reliable in our words, behaviors and actions.

### INCLUSION

We seek to welcome and fully engage people of diverse backgrounds, abilities and perspectives to advance our work.

### DISCOVERY

We seek to be an innovative community, to improve our individual capabilities and to share knowledge with one another.

### EXCELLENCE

We perform high-quality education, research, patient care and community enhancement, and are always mindful of the enduring value of safety and continuous improvement.



## SPEAK UP

If you witness or are asked to participate in actions that are not consistent with our values, tell someone.

Ask your supervisor, department head, academic dean, residence advisor or ombudsman for advice.

If that is not possible, contact **800.826.8109** to discuss your question or report your concern. The toll-free number is a confidential, and anonymous if you choose, service provided 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

## Key Points to Remember

- *The Speak-up Hotline should be used only to clarify concerns and to report legitimate cases of actual or suspected wrongdoing, such as violations of Duke Values, the Code of Conduct, or policies and procedures.*
- *Making false or exaggerated reports against co-workers is serious, and can lead to disciplinary action.*
- *Retaliation against an employee for making a call to the hotline is never acceptable, and could itself turn into a legitimate ethical complaint.*

We speak up when words, behaviors or actions are not consistent with our values.

It takes courage to come forward. Retaliation for reporting concerns in good faith is strictly prohibited.