



Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace

CREW

Civility

A service of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs,
Veterans Health Administration,
National Center for Organization Development

A civil work environment is one where employees respect and value one another through cooperation, fair resolution of disputes, teamwork, and non-discriminatory behavior.

Benefits of a Civil Workplace

Workplace civility is linked to organizational excellence. More civil work environments experience:

- Greater job satisfaction and overall mental health¹
- Less absenteeism and turnover,¹ and lower burnout²
- In healthcare settings: trust in management and improved patient satisfaction^{3,4}

Civility in VA

VA measures civility in its annual, census-wide VA All Employee Survey (AES) by asking employees if they feel their workgroup members are: (1) respectful, (2) able to resolve conflicts, (3) cooperative, and (4) accepting of individual differences. Items are scored from 1: Strongly Disagree to 5: Strongly Agree.

In VA, more civil work environments have a positive impact on:



VA Performance Outcomes and Costs:

- Fewer EEO claims and sick leave usage, faster Veterans claims processing time, and greater patient satisfaction and patient loyalty
- As workplace civility increases, so do cost savings. VHA facilities (in 2011) with the highest civility spent \$2.2 mil. less on formal EEO claims and \$26.2 mil. less in employee sick leave costs compared to VHA facilities with the lowest civility



Veteran Clients:

- In VHA: Improved Veteran satisfaction with quality of care and willingness to recommend VHA services to others
- In VBA: Fewer processing days for VBA claims and greater claims accuracy



Employee Satisfaction:

- Improved employee satisfaction with the job and direct supervisors, better employee engagement, and greater intent to stay with VA



Create a Civil Workplace

A civil work environment requires **changing the organizational climate** one work group at a time. The critical mechanism is an organization's commitment to giving time, attention, and support.

VA's intervention model called CREW (Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace) is a data-informed and -tested model for building workplace civility.^{5,6} CREW works by first identifying, then recreating, successful, satisfying work experiences, and finding opportunities for improvement by focusing on the positive change that group members want, rather than what is not wanted.⁷

CREW is a **person-centered model** that cultivates group members' awareness of their interpersonal impact on the broader group norms around and experiences with civil workplace interactions. In this approach, **civil workplace behaviors are locally-defined** by the participating members.⁸

CREW is not a quick fix for a very troubled team or a substitute for good supervision. This model works best with groups that are not in crisis, are not extremely understaffed with little time to invest in CREW meetings, and are open to participation.

References below (#6,7,8) discuss how to run CREW.

Civility and Beyond

A civil workplace does not exist in a vacuum, but thrives with other healthy organizational qualities: **employee engagement, psychological safety, and servant leadership**, to name a few. Civil relationships within top management teams are significantly related to many aspects of culture, including predicting employee perceptions of their workplace.⁹ In VA, servant leadership, civility, and psychological safety are foundational elements of leadership development programs, while employee engagement and its drivers are organizational priority goals.

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Connecting Civility and CREW

"The link between employee satisfaction, patient satisfaction and clinical outcomes is clear.

CREW has provided the necessary tools for us to achieve unprecedented levels of civility, respect and engagement in the workplace, resulting in patient satisfaction."
Rica Lewis-Payton, Director, Birmingham Medical Center

"Through CREW, employees were able to identify and change unappreciated behaviors in the workplace.

Employees work together where they resisted before, and are cordial where they avoided one another before. Sincere commitment to CREW will make a difference where you work."
Cliff Wrencher, CREW Facilitator and AFGE President, Central Alabama Veterans Health Care System

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