



**PREVENTING
INCIVILITY:
TOP 10 TIPS FOR CAOS TO
FOSTER RESPECTFUL
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
ELECTED OFFICIALS**

Preventing Incivility: Top 10 Tips for CAOs to Foster Respectful Relationships with Elected Officials

For Chief Administrative Officers (CAOs) who have yet to encounter deteriorating relationships with elected officials, taking proactive measures is essential for preventing and mitigating potential instances of bullying or abusive behavior. Here are key strategies to help you set the stage for a respectful and productive working environment:

1. Set Boundaries Early	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clearly communicate what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behavior from the outset. Establishing these boundaries early helps set the tone for respectful interactions.• Utilize orientation sessions with elected officials to outline expectations for professional conduct and to discuss the importance of mutual respect.
2. Have a Solid Employment Contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure your employment contract includes key clauses that outline your role and responsibilities and protects against undue interference.• Regularly consult with legal advisors to keep your contract up-to-date and reflective of best practices.• Rather than relying solely on the employment contract, consider implementing dispute resolution procedures in workplace policies. This approach may provide more flexibility for addressing disputes and ensures that policies can be updated more easily in line with organizational changes.
3. Build Strong Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Foster open lines of communication with elected officials to build trust and mutual respect. Regularly engage in dialogue to address concerns before they escalate.• Schedule regular meetings with key officials to discuss ongoing projects and any potential issues. This proactive approach helps in maintaining a healthy relationship.
4. Open Communication: Stay Informed and Prepared	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Familiarize yourself with your municipality's policies on conduct and grievance procedures. Knowing the formal channels for addressing issues can guide your actions.• Participate in training programs on conflict management and leadership to stay equipped with strategies for handling difficult situations.• Communicate your leadership values and commitment to serve Council and staff. Some CAOs use mantras or favourite phrases on a regular basis that clearly articulate their core leadership values.
5. Document Interactions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Keep thorough documentation of all interactions, especially those involving conflicts or potential abuse. Documenting dates, times, and details can provide crucial evidence if formal action becomes necessary.

6. Utilize Support Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with experienced CAOs who can provide guidance and support. Their insights can be invaluable in navigating challenging interactions. • Engage with associations like CAMA to access resources, training, and a network of peers.
7. Promote a Culture of Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lead by example and demonstrate respectful behavior in all interactions. This sets a standard for others to follow. • Implement programs that recognize and reward respectful and professional behavior among staff and elected officials.
8. Implement Clear Policies and Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that your municipality has clear policies on harassment and incivility. Reinforce these policies through regular training and communication. • Emphasize the importance of adhering to the Code of Conduct for all elected officials and staff.
9. Proactive Communication Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilize conflict resolution strategies such as active listening, finding mutual interests, and proposing compromises. • When necessary, engage neutral third parties to mediate conflicts and facilitate resolutions.
10. Focus on Self-Care and be Ready for Formal Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prioritize self-care and stress management techniques to maintain your well-being and resilience. Dealing with abusive behavior can be taxing, so it's important to take care of yourself. • If all other strategies fail and abusive behavior persists, be prepared to file a formal complaint through established channels. Ensure your complaint is well-documented and supported by evidence.

By adopting these proactive measures and implementing preventive strategies, CAOs can establish a positive and supportive work environment that promotes respectful communication, collaboration, and ethical conduct. This foundation helps mitigate the risk of bullying or abusive behavior and upholds the principles of ethical governance within municipalities.

CAMA stands ready to support CAOs through these challenges, providing resources and a network of peers to ensure you are never alone in your efforts.