

Policy on Sexual Harassment

Canadian Yearly Meeting Personnel Committee

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Because of our deep conviction that there is that of God in every person, Friends affirm the basic dignity of all humankind. We seek to be a community of trust and mutual concern which challenges all forms of violence and oppression, a community in which faith and principles find appropriate expression in action. Sexual harassment and abuse profoundly violates both the individual and that community of love and trust for which we yearn. When such abuse has occurred, Friends are called to assist in support and healing.

Canadian Yearly Meeting is committed to providing a work environment for its employees and volunteers that is free from discrimination and harassment. This includes those forms of discrimination and harassment that are unlawful. Actions, words, jokes, comments based on an individual's sex, sexual orientation, race, disability, ethnicity, age or religious beliefs will not be tolerated.

In particular, sexual harassment, both overt and subtle, is a form of misconduct that is demeaning to another person and undermines trust and respect. Anyone engaging in such behaviour will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment, termination of committee appointment or exclusion from a gathering, project or office premises.

A man, woman or child may be the victim of sexual harassment, and a woman, man or child may be the harasser.

Definition:

Sexual harassment usually falls into one of three categories, but is not limited to:

1. Verbal: sexual innuendo, suggestive comments, threats, insults, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions.
2. Nonverbal: making suggestive or insulting noises, obscene gestures, whistling, leering.
3. Physical: touching, brushing body, pinching, attempted or actual sexual intercourse, assault.

Often there are differences in power or influence between parties. There may also be explicit or implied threats or promises of favour toward a person who is subjected to sexual harassment. Persons who depend on an employed position for their means of livelihood are particularly vulnerable to differences in power.

In addition, certain behaviour that is not directed at a particular person may nevertheless

contribute to a "hostile work environment" and constitute sexual harassment. Examples include the posting of pornographic or suggestive art in offices or public areas, or sexually explicit discussions which may be acceptable to the participants but not to others within hearing.

Incidents of sexual or other unlawful harassment include (among others) the experience of being sexually harassed, an unjust accusation of sexual harassment, the observation of acts of sexual harassment or the presence of a hostile work environment.

In unclear or borderline cases, those who are made uncomfortable by any behaviour may make their views known to the appropriate person (see below) and the matter will be investigated fairly and without punitive intent so that the legitimate concerns of all parties may be respected.

Procedure:

This policy applies to employees, committee members, programme participants and volunteers.

Anyone who discovers potential criminal behaviour especially involving minors must immediately contact the police.

Any person who wants to report an incident of sexual or other unlawful harassment has the responsibility of reporting the matter promptly to the clerk of the employee's Yearly Meeting committee. If the clerk of the Yearly Meeting committee that employs the staff person is unavailable or if the person believes it would be inappropriate to contact that individual, the person should contact the clerk of Personnel Policy Committee or another member of that committee in a timely manner. If the person who is making a complaint conscientiously feels that contacting these individuals would not be appropriate, s/he may contact the clerk of Representative Meeting.

Any clerk who becomes aware of possible sexual or other unlawful harassment should promptly initiate an investigation and immediately advise the clerk of the Personnel Policy Committee that such an investigation is being carried out. The clerk of the Yearly Meeting committee that employs the staff person ensures that the investigation is carried out by a person trained and experienced in such investigations. The clerk of the Personnel Policy Committee has a responsibility to ensure that all investigations of sexual or other unlawful harassment are conducted in a timely and appropriate manner. S/he is also responsible for ensuring that any individual involved in such an investigation has personal support when such is requested. This applies equally to all parties in such circumstances. It is essential that every complaint be handled in a confidential manner consistent with the need to investigate it promptly, thoroughly and impartially. All parties involved will be interviewed individually and asked to submit written, signed statements. The involved parties will be informed in writing of the findings of the investigation and/or corrective actions, if any. Involved parties have the right to lodge a complaint with the police or to engage legal counsel, as appropriate, but need to know that this may hinder or prevent this policy from proceeding.

We seek to protect each person. We ask persons who are not involved in the investigation to

understand the importance of confidentiality and not to circulate rumours or seek to gain information to which they are not entitled. Inappropriate sharing of information may endanger the integrity of the investigation and may subject those involved to possible lawsuits for defamation of character.

Incidents of concern or complaints involving persons not covered by this policy may be reported to persons designated by Yearly Meeting of Ministry and Counsel or to persons designated by local Meetings for this purpose.

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