



Policy on Harassment

Scope

This policy applies to all WRJ Board members, WRJ members, employees, and anyone who participates in and/or supports WRJ work and programs. WRJ expects all its affiliates to uphold the dictates and the spirit of this policy.

Values

Women of Reform Judaism (WRJ) strives to create an environment of *kavod* (honor and respect), demonstrating regard for one another in the spirit of *b'tzelim Elohim* (being created in God's image). To this end, WRJ seeks to create communities of mutual respect, physical and emotional safety, and fundamental decency, valuing equally all individuals in its sphere.

We value the importance of *dibbur* (honest and thoughtful speech,) *sh'tikah* (listening silently to understand), and *savlanut* (patience.) Therefore, we ask and strongly encourage individuals to come forward (as described in the procedure below) if they experience inappropriate conduct and/or behavior and we will support them in doing so.

Further, we expect individuals to come forward (as described in the procedure below) if they observe or become aware of inappropriate conduct and/or behavior. We will listen patiently and carefully when concerns are raised, treating all parties with respect. We apply the principle of *akhrayut* (accountability) to our organization in creating the community culture we seek and in addressing any concerns raised.

This policy has a twofold purpose:

1. to take proactive measures to **prohibit** and **address** harassment, bullying, discrimination, and other abusive behaviors which undermine the above values; and,
2. to ensure that our values are woven into the fabric of our organization by embedding **prevention** practices in our programs, operations, and culture.

This document is not static. It is meant to be revisited and to change as we continue to learn and grow as an organization and community.

Prohibited Conduct

WRJ does not tolerate, in any form or at any time, discrimination, harassment, bullying, sexual misconduct, threats, intimidation, menacing, microaggressions, or any other offensive

behavior or acts against anyone in our community or participating in our events. This includes but is not limited to actions taken against others based on their race, age, religion, disability, marital status, veteran status, nationality, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or expression, physical appearance, size, ethnicity, origin, religion, class, or any other identity.

We are each responsible for ensuring that personal and sexual boundaries are respected in our relationships with others. In particular, bullying and sexual misconduct are both inconsistent with respecting the dignity of human beings. WRJ volunteers are obligated to refrain from all such behaviors when interacting with other WRJ employees, volunteers, program participants in WRJ-related activities, or others with whom they interact during a WRJ-related activity.

In determining whether harassment or other offensive conduct has occurred, it is not a sufficient excuse that the alleged offender “meant no harm” or was “just kidding.” Instead, the standard to be applied is the perspective of a reasonable recipient of the alleged harassing or offensive conduct.

Behavior to be Reported to Law Enforcement

The following categories of behavior are, by definition, unethical, never acceptable, *and are to be reported to legal authorities:*

1. Child abuse, including any bullying, sexual activity, involvement or attempt of sexual contact by an adult, as defined by applicable law, with a person who is under the applicable legal age of consent.
2. Sexual activity with a person who is legally incompetent or otherwise unable to give consent.
3. Physical assaults and/or violence of a sexual nature, such as rape, battery, abuse, or any attempt to commit such acts.

Sexual Harassment

Sexual harassment can occur between any individuals, regardless of their sex or gender. Harassers can be anyone in the work or volunteer environment. Sexual harassment can occur while engaged in or traveling for WRJ business or while otherwise engaged in at WRJ-sponsored events. Calls, texts, emails, and social media usage can constitute harassment.

The following describes some of the types of acts that may be sexual harassment and that are strictly prohibited:

- Physical acts of a sexual nature, such as, but not limited to:
 - Touching, pinching, patting, kissing, hugging, grabbing, brushing against or poking another’s body
 - Rape, sexual battery, molestation or attempts to commit these assaults.
- Unwanted sexual advances or propositions, such as, but not limited to:

- Requests for sexual favors accompanied by implied or overt threats concerning the target's treatment in nominations, appointments, leadership opportunities, or group activities.
- Subtle or obvious pressure for unwelcome sexual activities.
- Sexually oriented gestures, noises, remarks or jokes, or comments about a person's sexuality or sexual experience, which create a hostile environment.
- Sex stereotyping, which occurs when conduct or personality traits are considered inappropriate simply because they may not conform to other people's ideas or perceptions about how individuals of a particular sex should act or look.
- Sexual or discriminatory displays or publications, such as, but not limited to:
 - Publicly displaying pictures, posters, calendars, graffiti, objects, promotional material, reading materials or other materials that are sexually demeaning or pornographic.
- Hostile actions taken against an individual because of that individual's sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and the status of being transgender.

Bullying

Bullying is unwanted, hostile behavior, either as a single act or repeated over time, committed with the intent to degrade, humiliate, or oppress another person. It may include:

- Verbal behavior such as making threats, inappropriate sexual comments, and taunting;
- Social misbehavior such as spreading rumors and purposeful exclusion;
- Physical behavior that involves hurting another individual's body or damaging possessions;
- Cyberbullying, such as persistent, unwanted texts, phone calls, or social media messages, or posting private, personal information of others online (known as "doxing")

Bullying typically involves a real or perceived power imbalance such as using popularity, position, physical strength, or access to embarrassing information in order to control or harm others. Thus, it is important to note that while bullying will not be tolerated, respectful disagreement and good-faith critiques of one's work product and activities, even if sometimes harsh, are not bullying. Individuals' ability to disagree and/or share ideas and concerns openly and without reprisal must not be compromised and will be respected and protected.

Prevention

WRJ firmly believes that prevention is the best tool for the elimination of harassment. Accordingly, WRJ encourages everyone to assist in preventing harassment from occurring, such as by affirmatively raising the subject and expressing strong disapproval of inappropriate behaviors.

Retaliation

There may be times when a volunteer or employee learns of a situation that appears to constitute prohibited conduct under this policy. WRJ encourages individuals to call to its attention instances of misconduct by any of its employees or volunteers and, to that end, to

protect from threats or retaliation any person who, in good faith, reports actual or perceived infractions of this policy.

Harassment or adverse action affecting the employment or participation in WRJ programs of any person who makes a good-faith report of prohibited conduct under this policy is itself also prohibited conduct and, in the case of an employee, may result in discipline in accordance with the URJ Employee Handbook.

Examples of retaliation include, but are not limited to:

- Adverse treatment in nominations, appointments or leadership opportunities.
- Excluding an individual from group activities
- Bullying as described above

Reporting

Individuals who experience, observe or are made aware of a possible violation of this policy should report the concern to WRJ. This may be done by:

- E-mailing to the confidential mailbox of the Ethics Chair of WRJ (ethics@wrj.org) or
- Contacting the President (wrijpresident@wrj.org) or Executive Director (wrjexecdir@wrj.org)

A report about the Executive Director should be made to the President.

A report about the President should be made to the Ethics Chair.

Reports may be anonymous. Anonymous reports will be responded to when possible, based on the information provided. While all reports are taken seriously, if an anonymous report is too general or lacking in specifics, it may not be possible to fully investigate it.

WRJ *will* look into every report and determine, to the best of its ability, if prohibited conduct is occurring and, if so, will take action to stop it. If requested, WRJ will keep identities confidential to the extent possible.

Investigation

Reports implicating members of individual women's groups will be referred to their women's group President, congregation's President or Senior Rabbi to be addressed in accordance with the congregation's code, policies and/or procedures.

For reports implicating WRJ Board or District Board Members, the President, Executive Director and Ethics Chair will meet as soon as practicable to determine the path forward for each report, ideally within a week of the report. To ensure timely action, any two of the three may make that determination. If any of those three individuals are the subject of the report, the determination will be made by the other two. Options include:

- Referring to law enforcement. This is required for allegations of illegal behavior as described above.
- Referring to URJ Human Resources (for WRJ staff.)
- Referring to URJ Ethics Council (for WRJ President.)
- Engaging an external party to conduct an investigation. This should be the default for allegations of sexual harassment as described within this policy.
- Conducting an internal investigation. Internal investigations may be conducted by the Executive Director jointly with the President and/or the President’s designee, at least one of whom must have expertise in conducting investigations.

Consequences/Sanctions

For reports that are substantiated, in whole or in part, consequences will be determined as follows:

- For WRJ staff, determination is per URJ policy and Human Resources processes.
- For lay leaders (including the WRJ President), determination will be made by the Personnel Committee. (The Personnel Committee may consult with the president of a district if the matter involves a district leader who is not also a WRJ Board member.) If an individual implicated is a member of the Personnel Committee, they will not participate in the determination. Options include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:
 - Warning
 - Dismissal from leadership position(s), including e.g., board seats, committees, task forces, and representing WRJ with other entities
 - Ineligibility for consideration by future nominating committees
 - Barring from participation in future WRJ events
 - Advising the individual’s congregation of the matter

Implementation (Living this Policy)

- The Executive Committee shall ensure that this policy is reviewed as appropriate (including any relevant change in law,) but in no event will it be reviewed less than annually. This review will include an assessment of the effectiveness of the policy and its implementing procedures, including the number and nature of reports made under this policy.
- All WRJ Board members and all elected WRJ District Board members shall be required annually to read, affirm understanding of, and compliance with, this policy.
- Training
 - Upon initial approval of this policy, the President will designate a member of the Executive Committee and either a Presidential Appointee or consultant with expertise in the field to develop a training plan for WRJ.
 - The training plan will be reviewed annually and updated as needed.
 - Annual training on this policy will be provided for all WRJ Board members. New board members, including those returning after a break in service, will receive a “deeper dive.”

- Training for elected District Board members will be provided at minimum at the beginning of each new board term.
- The Executive Director shall maintain confidential records of all reports and outcomes. (Note: If the Executive Director is the subject of a report, URJ Human Resources will maintain the records.)
- The Executive Director shall consider any reports made under this policy in connection with individual hiring or promotion decisions.
- The Executive Director shall communicate information about substantiated allegations about lay leaders seeking to advance in the organization. This may include informing nominating processes, portfolio assignments, etc.
 - In making nominating decisions, the committees will consider any reports made under this policy, e.g., any prior instances of bullying by the candidate. Nominating Committee Chairs will contact the Executive Director early in their process to obtain any relevant information about candidates.
- WRJ events
 - WRJ will maintain a participant code of conduct implementing the principles and requirements of this policy. Registration for WRJ events will include acknowledgment of this participant code.
 - For events held in person, there will be at least one designated responder on site, identified to participants, to whom any concerns can be directed.
- WRJ will encourage its member women's groups to encourage their congregations to establish and maintain policies on harassment. In the absence of congregational policy, women's groups should establish and maintain their own policies.