ADOPTING AND IMPLEMENTING AN EVENT CODE OF CONDUCT

WHAT IS A CODE OF CONDUCT?

A code of conduct is a clear and enforceable statement of behavioral expectations for your organization’s events, conferences, and online communications. Its purpose is to protect participants from harm, and particularly to protect those with less privilege and power from harassment, bullying, and other abuse by those with more privilege and power.

Later in this document, you will find a model Event Code of Conduct, and a model procedure for enforcing the code of conduct. Feel free to adapt this material to suit the needs of your organization and members.

This introductory section describes the preparations needed to implement and enforce a Event Code of Conduct.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR CODE OF CONDUCT ENFORCEMENT

Publicize the Code of Conduct
Publicizing the Code of Conduct removes the excuse of “I didn’t know . . .” and is both a deterrent to potential violators, and an encouragement for targets or witnesses to report incidents.

Use multiple media and platforms to publicize the Code of Conduct. For example,
- Present the Code of Conduct as part of the event registration process and require that registrants indicate that they have read and agree to abide by the Code of Conduct before they complete registration.
- Include the Code of Conduct (either in full or in abbreviated form) in a prominent place in all versions of the event program.
- Have prominent signs posted throughout the event venue that summarize the Code of Conduct and emphasize the importance of complying with it.
- Announce the Code of Conduct from the stage or lectern at the opening session and at other sessions throughout the event.

Train the Staff
Ensure that event staff are fully trained (not just handed a written policy) on how to respond to reports of harassment. Training should include role-playing or discussion scenarios that give staff an opportunity to practice each step in the procedure.

If you choose to train a few members of staff, make sure that all staff (and contractors or volunteers as needed) know the policy and know whom to contact if a participant approaches
them to report an incident. Make sure that enough staff are fully trained to provide around-the-clock coverage. Make sure that their contact information is provided with the publicized policy.

**Identify the First Point of Contact and the Investigator**
Identify a trustworthy and trained staff member or an independent contractor be the first point of contact for taking reports on incidents of harassment. If this person will not be investigating incident reports, then identify a similarly trained individual as the investigator.

If at all possible, do not use a member volunteer as the first point of contact. This helps avoid a situation in which that volunteer has a conflict of interest – for example, when the violator is a close colleague, fellow Board or committee member, current or former supervisor or supervisee, current or former co-workers, etc.

**Establish a Procedure and Policies for Handling Information**
Create a form or template for incident reports, to ensure that all relevant and available information is recorded.

Develop a process for retaining and tracking information about incidents over time, in a way that preserves the confidentiality (or anonymity) of those reporting the incidents. Make sure you will be able to use records from past events to identify individuals who violate the code of conduct repeatedly.

**Establish a Procedure to Identify and Locate Participants**
Determine the best way to locate and contact participants, so that individuals can be identified be located quickly. For example: have access to mobile phone numbers for text messaging or calls, include a paging system in the event mobile app, allow podium announcements requesting that individuals report to the events office, use walkie-talkies to alert staff.

**Have Resources on Hand**
Compile information specific to the event locations, such as:
- Printed list of contact information for event staff (in case the target wants to contact someone after providing the incident report)
- Contact information for venue security
- Hotline numbers for crisis counseling services (e.g. https://www.rainn.org/) and for the nearest rape crisis center. In the event of a physical assault of any kind, rape crisis centers can provide counseling, an advocate to accompany the target if the target wants to notify police, and access to emergency care and evidence collection.

**Identify Potential Actions and Sanctions Before the Event**

**Offensive Slides or Statement in Presentations**
Presentations should not be stopped for one-time gaffes or minor problems, although a member of staff should speak to the presenter afterward.
However, if a presenter seriously or repeatedly violates the Code of Conduct, take immediate action to politely and calmly stop the presentation. For example, simply say "I'm sorry, this presentation cannot be continued at the present time." with no further explanation. Other sanctions may include:

- not publishing the presentation in any format (print, video, or otherwise)
- banning the presenter from presenting at future events

If it is not possible for staff to attend every session, **include information about the Code of Conduct (and permission to intervene) in all instructions, briefings, or trainings provided for session chairs and moderators.**

**Other Incidents**

Depending on the severity of the incident or the response of the violator, these and other sanctions may be applied:

- Warn the violator to cease their behavior and that any further reports will result in more serious sanctions
- Require that the violator immediately leave the event and not return
- Block the violator from further participation in an online event or forum
- Immediately end any volunteer responsibilities and privileges the violator holds. (If the violator is a Board member or officer this may require post-event follow-up on procedures for removal.)
- Require that the violator not volunteer or serve as a contract employee or vendor for the organization, either indefinitely or for a certain time period.
- Require that the violator forgo or refund any travel grants and similar funding or financial support they received (note: this would need to be a condition of the grant at the time of being awarded)
- Ban the violator from future events (either indefinitely or for a certain time period).

Repeated incidents, or a single incident of behavior that includes physical assault (including groping), real or implied threat of physical harm, or the real or implied threat of professional or financial consequences, should trigger this level of sanction.
- Remove and ban the violator from membership in the organization. (This may require post-event follow-up on procedures for removal.)

**DO NOT** ask the violator to avoid contact with the target, as this will violate the confidentiality of the report.

**DO NOT** attempt to extract an apology from the violator.

Give the violator information about a post-event grievance procedure if there is one, but in the meantime the report and the staff decision on sanctions stands.
Establish a Grievance Procedure
Establish a procedure for appeal of decisions made and actions taken at the event. This may be as simple as asking the violator to contact the CEO or event manager to review the decision.

The remainder document comprises a model code of conduct.

**MODEL CODE OF CONDUCT FOR CONFERENCES AND EVENTS**

To be effective, this policy must be widely publicized. Attendees should be required to read and agree to abide by this policy before completing the submission process for session proposals or abstracts and before completing registration for the event. It should appear in full in event materials (for example, the event website and event book) and an abbreviated version (included here after the full version) should be posted throughout the event venue, including during slide shows between sessions.

1. **Purpose**

[EVENT NAME] aims to be inclusive to the largest number of contributors, with the most varied and diverse backgrounds possible. As such, we are committed to providing a friendly, safe and welcoming environment for all, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, ability, or other personal characteristics.

This Code of Conduct outlines our expectations for all those who participate in [EVENT or ONLINE FORUM] as well as the consequences for unacceptable behavior.

We expect all participants in [EVENT or ONLINE FORUM] to create safe and positive experiences for everyone.

“Participant” in this policy refers to anyone present at [EVENT NAME], including staff, contractors, vendors, exhibitors, venue staff, members, and all attendees.

2. **Expected Behavior**

We expect all participants at [EVENT NAME] (attendees, members, vendors, exhibitors, contractors, staff, and venue staff) to abide by this Code of Conduct in all venues at [EVENT NAME], including ancillary events, official and unofficial social gatherings, and interactions online and on social media. [EVENT NAME] event venues may be shared with members of the public; please be respectful to all patrons of these locations.

3. **Unacceptable Behavior**

Unacceptable behaviors include, but are not limited to:
• intimidating, harassing, abusive, discriminatory, derogatory or demeaning speech or actions by any participant in [EVENT NAME], at all related events and in one-on-one communications, including online communications, carried out in the context of [EVENT NAME];
• harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, disability, age, appearance, or any other personal characteristic;
• inappropriate or gratuitous use of nudity, sexual images, or stereotyped images in public spaces (including presentation slides), including online;
• deliberate intimidation, stalking or following in person on online;
• harassing photography or recording;
• sustained disruption of talks or other events;
• unwelcome and uninvited attention or contact in person or online;
• physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping);
• real or implied threat of physical harm;
• real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm.

Venue staff and exhibitors in the exhibit hall, sponsor or vendor booths, or similar activities are also subject to the Code of Conduct. In particular, exhibitors should not use sexualized or stereotyped images, activities, or other material. Booth staff (including volunteers) should not use sexualized or stereotyped clothing, uniforms, or costumes, or otherwise create a sexualized or hostile environment.

Be careful in the words that you choose. Harassment committed in a joking manner still constitutes unacceptable behavior. Remember that sexist, racist, and other exclusionary jokes can be offensive to those around you. Excessive swearing and offensive jokes are not appropriate for [EVENT NAME].

Retaliation for reporting unacceptable behavior is a violation of the Code of Conduct.

Falsely reporting unacceptable behavior is a violation of the Code of Conduct.

4. Consequences of Unacceptable Behavior
Unacceptable behavior from any participant at [EVENT NAME], including attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, contractors, volunteer leaders, vendors, venue staff, and anyone with decision-making authority, will not be tolerated.

If a participant engages in unacceptable behavior, [EVENT PRODUCER] reserves the right to take any action [EVENT PRODUCER] deems appropriate. [EVENT PRODUCER] reserves the right to remove an individual from [EVENT NAME] without warning or refund, to prohibit an individual from attendance at future [EVENT NAME], and to notify the individual’s employer of the action taken.
5. If You Are Subject to or Witness Unacceptable Behavior
If you are being subject to, or notice that someone else is being subject to, behavior that violates this Code of Conduct, please contact [NAME] at [CELL PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL ADDRESS, AND OTHER FORMS OF CONTACT]. [Alternative version: If you are being subject to, or notice that someone else is being subject to, behavior that violates this Code of Conduct, please tell a member of the [EVENT PRODUCER] staff immediately. Staff can be identified by [clothing, name badges, or other way to ID staff].

All complaints will be treated seriously and responded to promptly.

All reports are kept confidential to the extent possible.

If possible, provide the following information:
• Identifying information (name/badge number, appearance) of the participant who violated the Code of Conduct
• The behavior that was in violation
• The location and approximate time of the behavior
• The circumstances surrounding the incident
• Other people involved in or witnessing the incident

Staff are trained on how to deal with the incident and how to further proceed with the situation.

Staff will take steps to assist the targets and witnesses of Code of Conduct violations to feel safe for the duration of [EVENT NAME]. These may include providing an escort, finding accommodation at a different hotel, or changing travel plans. Staff will NOT contact venue security or local law enforcement unless requested to do so by the target of the Code of Conduct violation.

6. Addressing Grievances
If you feel you have been falsely or unfairly accused of violating this Code of Conduct you should notify [GOVERNING BODY] with a concise description of your grievance. Your grievance will be handled in accordance with our existing policies. [LINK TO POLICY]

[NOTE: Every organization’s governing policies should dictate how you handle warnings and expulsions of members. It is strongly recommended that you mention those policies here and that you include a mechanism for addressing grievances.]
CODE OF CONDUCT

[EVENT PRODUCER] is committed to ensuring a safe and welcoming environment for all participants at [EVENT NAME]

We expect all participants at [EVENT NAME] to abide by this Code of Conduct in all venues at [EVENT NAME], including ancillary events and official and unofficial social gatherings.

IF YOU ARE BEING SUBJECTED TO, OR NOTICE THAT SOMEONE ELSE IS BEING SUBJECT TO, BEHAVIOR THAT VIOLATES THIS CODE OF CONDUCT, CONTACT [NAME] AT [CONTACT INFORMATION].

[Alternative: PLEASE CONTACT A MEMBER OF THE [EVENT PRODUCER] STAFF IMMEDIATELY. Staff can be identified by [clothing, name badges, or other way to ID staff].

All reports are confidential.

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