

Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Anti-Harassment & Anti-Bullying Policy is to ensure that all individuals involved with the Rescue—directors, officers, volunteers, fosters, adopters, and partners—are treated with dignity, respect, and professionalism. The Rescue is committed to maintaining a safe, supportive, and drama-free environment where harassment, bullying, intimidation, and disrespectful behavior are not tolerated.

This policy reinforces the Rescue's Core Values and Standards of Conduct and provides clear expectations and procedures for addressing concerns.

2. Applicability

This policy applies to:

- Directors
- Officers
- Committee members
- Volunteers
- Fosters
- Adopters
- Contractors
- Any individual representing or acting on behalf of the Rescue

It applies to all interactions, including:

- In-person communication
- Phone calls and text messages
- Email and digital communication
- Social media and online platforms
- Events, meetings, and rescue-related activities

3. Definitions

a. Harassment

Harassment includes any unwelcome conduct—verbal, written, physical, or digital—that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment. Examples include:

- Insults, slurs, or derogatory comments
- Threats or intimidation
- Unwanted or inappropriate messages
- Persistent unwanted contact
- Disrespectful or demeaning behavior

- Harassment based on protected characteristics (race, gender, disability, etc.)

b. Bullying

Bullying includes repeated or severe behavior intended to intimidate, belittle, or undermine another person. Examples include:

- Gossiping or spreading rumors
- Public shaming or humiliation
- Excluding or isolating individuals
- Undermining someone's role or credibility
- Aggressive or hostile communication
- Manipulative or controlling behavior
- Creating factions within any group (volunteer, foster, board, etc.)
- Encouraging people to bypass leadership
- Stirring conflict between groups (fosters, volunteers, etc.)
- Spreading partial information to influence decisions

c. Retaliation

Retaliation includes any negative action taken against an individual for reporting a concern, participating in an investigation, or asserting their rights under this policy.

Retaliation is strictly prohibited.

4. Expectations for Conduct

All individuals representing the Rescue shall:

- Treat others with respect, kindness, and professionalism
- Communicate in a constructive, drama-free manner
- Resolve disagreements respectfully and privately
- Avoid gossip, divisiveness, and inflammatory behavior
- Maintain a safe and supportive environment for volunteers, fosters, adopters, and animals
- Uphold the Rescue's Core Values at all times

5. Reporting Concerns

Individuals who experience or witness harassment, bullying, or retaliation are encouraged to report concerns promptly.

Reports may be made to:

- The Board President
- The Board Secretary
- Any officer of the Rescue

- Through the Whistleblower Policy (if anonymity is desired)

Reports may be made verbally or in writing. Written reports are preferred for documentation.

The Rescue encourages early reporting so concerns can be addressed before they escalate.

6. Confidentiality

The Rescue will maintain confidentiality to the fullest extent possible. Information will be shared only with individuals who need to know in order to investigate and address the concern.

Absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if:

- Disclosure is required by law
- Disclosure is necessary to protect individuals or animals
- Disclosure is necessary to conduct a fair investigation

7. Investigation Process

Upon receiving a report, the Board President or designated officer shall:

1. Acknowledge receipt (unless anonymous)
2. Conduct a preliminary review
3. Determine whether a formal investigation is needed
4. Assign investigators (disinterested directors or an external party)
5. Document findings and recommended actions

Investigations shall be conducted promptly, fairly, and without bias.

8. Corrective Action

If harassment, bullying, or retaliation is substantiated, corrective action may include:

- Coaching or mediation
- Written warning
- Removal from volunteer or foster roles
- Removal from committees or leadership roles
- Removal from the Board under Article IV of the bylaws
- Termination of affiliation with the Rescue
- Referral to authorities if required

The severity of the action will match the severity of the behavior.

9. False or Malicious Reports

Reports must be made in good faith. Knowingly false or malicious reports may result in corrective action.

10. Non-Retaliation

Retaliation against any individual who reports a concern or participates in an investigation is strictly prohibited. Any retaliation will result in corrective action, up to and including removal from the Board or termination of volunteer roles.

11. Alignment With Core Values

This policy supports and reinforces the Rescue's Core Values, including:

- Respect
- Compassion
- Accountability
- Integrity
- Safety
- A drama-free culture

All individuals representing the Rescue are expected to uphold these values at all times.

12. Annual Acknowledgment

Board members shall acknowledge this policy annually through the Annual Board Member Acknowledgment Form. Volunteers and fosters may be required to acknowledge this policy as part of onboarding.

Approved by the Board of Directors

Date: 06-06-2026