

# Harassment Policy for Society of St. Vincent de Paul Rockford Council and Conferences

**Scope** This policy applies to all Vincentians (members and volunteers) of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Rockford Council and subjugated Conferences. This policy is determined to cover all events and activities of the Society including but not limited to home visits, special works, employment, meetings and other service and /or fellowship gatherings of Vincentians including those with the public.

**Policy** The Society of St. Vincent de Paul is committed to providing a work/service environment that is free of hostilities, discrimination and unlawful harassment, whether actual or perceived. Improper interference with the ability of Vincentians to perform their expected duties is not tolerated.

Harassment includes unwelcome verbal, visual or physical conduct creating an intimidating, offensive, or hostile environment. Examples of harassment include verbal (including slurs, jokes, insults, epithets, gestures or teasing), graphic (including offensive posters, symbols, cartoons, drawings, computer displays, or e-mails), or physical conduct (including physically threatening another, blocking someone's way) that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion towards an individual because of any protected characteristic. Such conduct constitutes harassment when:

- It has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working/service environment;
- It has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work/service performance; or
- It otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment or volunteer service.

**With respect to sexual harassment the Society of St. Vincent de Paul prohibits the following conduct:**

- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and all other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual or otherwise offensive nature, especially where:
  - Such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of employment or service;
  - Rejection of such conduct is used as the basis for decisions affecting an individual's employment, service or receipt of service;
  - Conduct has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work/service environment.
- Offensive comments, jokes, innuendoes, and other sexually oriented statements.

**Examples of the types of conduct expressly prohibited by this policy include, but are not limited to, the following:**

- Touching, such as rubbing or massaging someone's neck or shoulders, stroking someone's hair, or brushing against the body of another
- Sexually suggestive touching of one's self or another person
- Grabbing, groping, kissing, or fondling
- Violating someone's "personal space"
- Whistling
- Lewd, off-color, sexually oriented comments or jokes
- Foul or obscene language
- Leering, staring, or stalking
- Suggestive or sexually explicit posters, calendars, photographs, graffiti, or cartoons
- Unwanted or offensive letters or poems
- Sitting or gesturing sexually
- Offensive phone calls, e-mails, voice-mails, or text messages
- Sexually oriented or explicit remarks, including written or oral references to sexual conduct
- Gossip regarding one's sex life, body, sexual activities, deficiencies, or prowess
- Questions about one's sex life or experiences
- Repeated invitations for meetings or requests for dates
- Sexual favors in return for employment rewards or services, or threats if sexual favors are not provided
- Sexual assault or rape
- Abusive or malicious conduct that a reasonable person would find hostile, offensive, and unrelated to the Society's legitimate business or services interests

Anyone engaging in any of the above-outlined activities will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or volunteer status.

It is the responsibility of the District President to inform all newly elected Conference Presidents regarding the existence of this policy. **This Policy should be discussed and emphasized annually.**

### **Harassment or Hostile Work/Service Environment Complaint Procedure**

It is the duty of all Vincentians to report immediately any incidents of sexual or other unlawful harassment or creation of a hostile work/service environment to the Conference President. If the Conference President is unavailable or if the Vincentian believes it inappropriate to contact that person, the Vincentian should immediately contact the District President who will handle the matter in a timely and confidential manner: see leadership contact information below. Vincentians can raise concerns and make reports without fear of reprisal.

#### **Minor Occurrences (Conference President)**

Generally harassment entails one person feeling very uncomfortable because of another's actions. Nonphysical or nonthreatening harassment might be considered a minor incident. In addition, the offender may not be aware of their harassment action or did not realize they have offended someone. In these cases the Conference President will discuss the harassment complaint/incident with the offender. In the event the Vincentian bringing the complaint believes that there might be a conflict of interest with the Conference President investigating the incident or the Conference President is the offender the District President will take over. Ultimately, the goal for the offender is to recognize their action, to change bad behavior and not to repeat the offense again. Additionally, the offender should apologize to those who were involved or offended.

#### **Serious Incidents or Recurring Minor Offenses (District President)**

Serious charges of harassment or hostile work/service environment will be investigated promptly and thoroughly by the District President. In addition to serious charges of harassment the District President will investigate recurring minor offenses where the offender's behavior has not changed. A report will be made to the Vincentian, to the offender and to the Council President concerning the results of the investigation.

If the Society of St. Vincent de Paul determines that harassment has occurred or that a hostile work/service environment has been created, it will stabilize the working environment for the Vincentian bringing the complaint, and will initiate appropriate disciplinary action against the harasser, up to and including termination and/or Society membership suspension. If an unlawful incident (sexual assault, rape) has occurred the local law enforcement will be contacted. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul understands that these matters can be extremely sensitive and, so far as possible, will keep all Vincentian complaints and communications in confidence.

Any Vincentian(s) who observes incidents of sexual or other kinds of harassment or a hostile work/service environment must report those incidents as soon as possible. A report may be made to that Vincentian's immediate officer. However, if the Vincentian wishes to maintain substantial confidentiality of the report, or where the Vincentian believes that the officer may be involved in the harassment or hostile work/service environment or believes that the officer might retaliate against them for making such a report, the reporting Vincentian(s) is encouraged to make a confidential report to the District President or to the Council President.

The reporting Vincentian will be requested to make a confidential written statement of the nature of the conduct underlying his or her claim. The statement will initiate an investigation directed by the District President or Council designee. Throughout the course of the investigation and thereafter, the complaining Vincentian will be protected from any form of retaliation by the person accused of the act of harassment or hostile work /service environment or by any other representative of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

Vincentians must recognize that this complaint procedure is not to be used maliciously or frivolously, but that it is designed to fairly and completely investigate good faith claims of harassment or hostile work/service environment. This does not mean that a claim which results in a finding of no harassment or hostile work/service environment will be viewed as either malicious or frivolous, but it does mean that if a claim is found to be groundless – that is, untruthful, malicious, frivolous and/or without any foundation - the complaining or reporting Vincentian may be subject to disciplinary action.

**The primary steps in the investigation process for Serious Incidents are as follows:**

1. The District President or Council designee will meet with the complaining or reporting Vincentian, provide assurances that the investigation will remain confidential so far as possible, and require that the reporting Vincentian make a written statement of the facts.
2. The reporting Vincentian will be encouraged to reveal the names of any other Vincentians who may be witnesses to the harassing conduct or hostile work/service environment, and any witnesses named or otherwise revealed during the investigation will be questioned on a confidential basis.
3. The person(s) accused of the harassment will be confidentially questioned and will be asked to make a written statement of his or her position regarding the specifics of the charge of harassment or hostile work/service environment. The accused persons will be warned that any attempts at retaliation in any form against the complaining/reporting Vincentian or other witnesses will result in immediate suspension of any persons involved in the attempt to retaliate.
4. The reporting or complaining Vincentian may be interviewed one or more additional times so that he or she has a full opportunity to comment on facts and circumstances found during the interviews of the accused and any material witnesses.
5. The District President or Council designee will make a confidential determination of the facts relative to whether or not harassment has occurred or a hostile work/service environment exists and what, if any, corrective action including disciplinary measures should be taken. The Council President will be notified of the harassment complaint.
6. The reporting Vincentian and the victim of the harassment or hostile work/service environment, if other than the reporting Vincentian, as well as the accused, will be informed of the corrective action to be taken and any disciplinary measures which result.
7. All witnesses interviewed during the investigation will be informed about the need to maintain absolute confidentiality surrounding all facets of the investigation and their knowledge of the facts or results. The District President will retain all confidential material. Any disclosure of the incident by any Vincentian may result in disciplinary action.

In summary, it is anticipated that some complaints of harassment or hostile work/service environment will result in clear findings of harassment or hostile work/service environment and appropriate corrective action will be taken. It is further recognized, however, that in some cases it will not be possible to determine whether or not harassment or a hostile work/service environment has actually occurred. In these cases, it is not the intent of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to form any conclusions about the truthfulness of the reporting Vincentian, the victim, the accused or any of the witnesses. In all cases, it is the intent of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to be responsive to any Vincentian who has an honest perception that he or she or any other Vincentian has been the victim of unlawful or otherwise inappropriate harassment or hostile work/service environment which interferes with a good working/service environment.

**Leadership Contacts:**

Conference President \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

District President \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_