



## **Society Response to Reports of Community Standards Violations**

Date approved: February 2, 2024

### **Society responsibilities**

The Society of Family Planning (the Society) takes community standards seriously. Concerns about violations of [Society Community Standards](#), and requests for sanctions due to perceived violations, will be reviewed by the Society in the following cases:

1. An individual self-reports they have been subjected to a violation of Society Community Standards during the course of a Society event and within the Society event space<sup>1</sup>, or
2. A Society Community Standards violation is reported publicly by an individual themselves or by a credible body such as the Federal government's Office of Research Integrity, a Federal or state agencies (e.g., NSF, NIH), a professional organization, an academic institution, an employer, or a court of law, and the violation is reported to the Society for review.

Requests for sanctions are not legal proceedings. The Society will consider requests for sanctions filed within four years of the occurrence of an event or the publication of the report or issuance of the finding, sanction, or action.

### **Report submission procedures**

Reports should typically be submitted in writing and must use the [Society Complaint Form](#) which can be filled out directly online, or downloaded and emailed to the [Executive Director](#) or any [Society Board member](#). Verbal reports will not be reviewed, except in cases of eminent and immediate bodily harm; in these cases the person receiving the verbal report will confirm verbally they are receiving an official report and will share the report with the Executive Director and the Board President as soon as possible, and will document the report in writing within 24 hours.

Reports must be submitted through the above means to be reviewed. Other types of reports will not be reviewed (eg, reports noted in program evaluations or media reports that have not resulted in official reports). Reports may be submitted by members or non-members.

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<sup>1</sup> Society event spaces are limited to Society-sponsored meeting spaces and receptions. Typically, spaces such as hotel lobbies, hotel rooms, or hotel restaurants will not be considered event spaces unless the Society is holding a sponsored event or reception within those spaces.

## Report review procedures

While the process may vary from case to case, investigations will generally take the following steps:

- When a report is received, the person receiving the report will immediately notify the Executive Director and Board President, unless either of those parties is involved. In the cases of involvement of the Executive Director or a personal conflict of interest, no additional staff member will be contacted and the report will go only to the Board President. In cases of Board President involvement or personal conflict of interest, the next highest ranking board member will be contacted (in order: President Elect, Treasurer, Secretary).
- Upon receipt of a report, the Executive Director and the Board President (or other ranking Board member) will create a Sanctions Panel.
- The Sanctions Panel will normally consist of the Executive Committee including the Board President, President-Elect, Treasurer, and Secretary and the Executive Director (*non voting.*) When conflicts of interest are identified, other board member(s) will be appointed by the Board President or most senior board member involved. Where the Executive Director, Board President, or Chair of the Governance Committee is the focus of the sanctions request, or has a personal conflict of interest, they will not participate in decisions about how/whether to proceed with the request, serve on the Sanctions Panel, or otherwise participate in the handling of the request. An administrative staff member at the Society may support this process through scheduling, notetaking, or other support.
- The Sanctions Panel will conduct a review of the allegations and take any interim actions (e.g. instructing the respondent to refrain from communications with the complainant) as appropriate.
- Based on the submitted documents, the Sanctions Panel will decide, in its sole and exclusive discretion, whether to proceed with consideration of sanctions, to dismiss the request, or to engage an independent reviewer to manage the proceedings. After review, the Sanctions Panel will discuss and vote on a motion of whether to proceed. An affirmative vote of the majority on the Sanctions Panel is required for this motion to pass.
  - If the decision is to proceed, the individual being considered for breach of Society Community Standards will be notified of the request for sanctions in writing, including a summary of the substance of the request, the names of the Sanctions Panel members, and any other relevant information about the process. The Sanctions Panel will also define an estimated timeline for the process. The Sanctions Panel will notify the person who submitted the report that the request has been accepted for investigation and inform them of the names of the Sanctions Panel members, other relevant information about the process, and the estimated timeline.
  - If the decision is not to proceed, the Sanctions Panel will report the decision and rationale back to the person who submitted the report.
  - If the decision is to engage an independent reviewer, the Sanctions Panel will issue a formal request in writing to the independent

reviewer outlining the request to recommend whether the report should proceed with consideration of sanctions and if so, a request to recommend sanctions. Independent review will be engaged if an insufficient number of board members are eligible to serve on the Sanctions Panel due to conflicts of interest.

If the Sanctions Panel decides to move forward with a request from an individual who believes they have been subjected to a violation of Society Community Standards during the course of a Society event and within the Society event space, the review will typically include:

- Interviews with all parties involved, including any relevant witnesses, as identified either by the individual submitting the report or the person accused of the violation and review of any relevant documentary evidence, and
- Creation of a written documentation of the information gathered from all parties, which includes complaint, overview of interviews, and decision made by Sanctions Panel.
- If the Sanctions Panel decides to move forward with a request in response to a Society Community Standards violation that is publicly reported by a credible body and submitted as a violation report to Society, the review will include:
  - Review of public statements and
  - Creation of a written documentation of the information gathered, which includes complaint, overview of relevant publicly available information, and decision made by Sanctions Panel.
- After review, the Sanctions Panel will discuss and vote on a motion of sanctions. An affirmative vote of the majority on the Sanctions Panel is required for this motion to pass.
- After the decision is made, the Sanctions Panel will provide a summary report to the full Board of Directors, the person who submitted the request, and the person identified in the request. The report will indicate if the motion passed or not, but neither the vote tally nor the decisions of individual members of the Sanctions Panel will be included.
- The Sanctions Panel will remain active until a determination has been made on the request, with efforts to determine a final decision regarding sanctions within 90 days of submission of the request for sanctions.

## Sanctions

Sanctions implemented will vary from case to case and will be based only on the information provided; no investigation outside of what is described above in the review procedures will be conducted. Any individual who is determined, after investigation, to have violated the Society's Community Standards will be subject to appropriate sanctions up to and including immediate expulsion from an event, membership, or other Society program. Possible sanctions include:

- Discharge or removal of offending officers, directors, or committee members

- Notification of the complaint to the offender's organization
- Removal of an individual from one or more Society meetings without refund for attendance
- Exclusion from future Society activities or events
- Revocation of membership status
- Revocation of Society honors or awards
- Suspension or revocation of grant funds
- Recommendations for training, education, and affirmation of this policy

The seriousness of the violation, the existence and nature of prior harassment complaints and/or policy breaches, and the wishes of the accuser, as well as other considerations, will be taken into account when determining action.

All sanctions and remedial actions will be imposed in a manner consistent with the Society's Bylaws and applicable law.

### **Confidentiality**

The Society will maintain the confidentiality of the complainant, the accused, and the witnesses to the extent possible under the circumstances. The Society cannot promise absolute confidentiality, but will strive to proceed on a need-to-know basis. The Society will not comment publicly or to outside parties about those who have made reports or who are the subject of reports. It is the responsibility of all individuals acting on behalf of the Society to not comment on or disclose the sanctions request except as authorized by the Society during and at the conclusion of the process as these matters are handled confidentially and may also present a legal risk.

### **Reporting without fear of retaliation**

Retaliation for reporting harassment will not be tolerated. This no-retaliation policy applies for all good faith complaints of harassment that are filed, whether held to be well founded or ultimately determined to be unfounded or indeterminable. Retaliation against any party involved - the accused, accuser, witnesses, and investigators - will not be tolerated.

### **Limitations**

The Society is committed to addressing violation of its Community Standards within its events and programs as provided in this policy. The Society is unable to adjudicate complaints outside of those outlined in this document. In addition, it is within the Society's sole and exclusive discretion whether to accept and/or proceed with reviewing any particular request for sanctions.

In determining whether a request for sanctions should be reviewed, the following limitations apply:

- The Society will not accept requests for sanctions outside of those outlined in this document.
- The Society will not accept requests for sanctions of conduct that have been

addressed in or are the subject of civil or criminal litigation, absent compelling circumstances. The Society may, however, consider any determinations made in such litigation in connection with its own activities and events.

- The Society will not accept requests for sanctions of conduct that are being investigated or are within the purview of the individual's employer, of a publisher of an individual's work, of a granting agency, or of another institution, absent compelling circumstances. The Society may, however, consider any determinations made in such investigations in connection with its own activities and events.
- The Society will not accept requests related to deceased individuals.
- The Society will not accept requests for re-review of determined sanctions, except in the cases when an appeal is submitted, as outlined below.
- Requests for sanctions regarding Society employees are handled under the Society's personnel policies and procedures and not this policy.

In cases outside of the Society's scope, individuals may seek to adjudicate cases through a governmental agency, one's own employer, or the employer of the other party or parties involved. Individuals may always choose to report crimes, including but not limited to, sexual violence, to the state or local police department or the county prosecutor's office where the incident(s) occurred, even if the incident occurs at a Society event or program.

### **Record keeping**

The Executive Director will prepare two annual reports of complaints that have been received of violations of Society Community Standards. The first report, containing very general information about the number and types of complaints received, is provided to the Board of Directors at an annual board meeting and is available to Society members, upon request. The second report describes each complaint received and action taken, with all identifying information removed. This report is held as a confidential record in the Society files and may be consulted only by members of the board in the course of their duties of investigation.

### **Appeals process**

After a review has been completed, the complainant or the accused may appeal the decision in limited cases. Appeals are not for the purpose of having a second review of all facts but are limited to considering: (1) evidence not previously available to the Society investigation, (2) material defects in the process leading to the decision, (3) severity or appropriateness of the imposed corrective action, or (4) when a sanctioned individual has completed a rehabilitation, reparations, or restorative justice process. Appeals in the first three cases will only be considered within 15 business days of the letter notifying the individual of the decisions. Appeals in the last case will be considered up to two years after notification of the decision.

Appeals must be submitted in writing to the Executive Director and the Board President. Where a complaint involves the Executive Director, or the Executive

Director has a personal conflict of interest, the appeal can be sent directly to the Board President. Where a complaint involves the Board President, or the Board President has a conflict of interest, the appeal can be sent directly to the Executive Director.

A member of the Board or the Executive Director will review the written appeal(s) and attempt to respond within 30 days.

Based on the submitted appeal documents, the Sanctions Panel will decide, in its sole and exclusive discretion, whether to proceed with consideration of sanctions or to dismiss the appeal. After review, the Sanctions Panel will discuss and vote on a motion of whether to proceed in reviewing appeal or to dismiss the appeal. An affirmative vote of the majority on the Sanctions Panel is required for this motion to pass. The Sanctions Panel will follow a similar review process for appeals as the process described above for initial violation submissions.