

## **HOMEWOOD FRIENDS MEETING POLICY AND PROCEDURES ON SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND HARASSMENT BASED ON RACE OR SEXUAL ORIENTATION**

*Homewood Friends Meeting is committed to providing environments for staff, volunteers, members, attenders, and program participants which are free of discrimination and harassment. Demeaning actions, words, jokes, or comments based on an individual's gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, national origin, age, disability or faith will not be tolerated. We also note that sexual harassment, which may be overt or subtle, is a form of demeaning and oppressive misconduct which, if alleged, we will investigate thoroughly and fairly.*

Homewood Friends Meeting wants to ensure that members and attenders are able to participate in our spiritual community without experiencing harassment. This policy addresses three specific types of harassment: sexual harassment, racial harassment, and harassment based on sexual orientation. Our consciousness of the need to prevent and respond to these types of harassment has been heightened by our realization that such behavior does sometimes occur at Friends' events.

Sexual harassment is unwelcome sexual or gender-based behavior. Racial harassment is unwelcome race-based behavior. Harassment based on sexual orientation is unwelcome behavior based on someone's sexual orientation. All may involve the exercise of formal or informal power by the harasser over the victim. Key concepts include *unwelcome*, *discrimination-based*, and *formal or informal power*, plus the basis of the behavior in differences in gender, race, or sexual orientation.

What one person might consider an innocent comment or behavior could be experienced as harassment by another, particularly if the behavior continues after the problematic nature of the behavior has been brought to the person's attention. Therefore, both the feelings of the person who reports feeling harassed and the behaviors and stated intentions of the alleged harasser are important factors in resolving problematic interactions. This policy describes how such situations should be resolved in the Homewood Friends community.

Does this mean that we must refrain from offering hugs to friends or making comments about a friend's appearance? No--not if the person welcomes the hug or the comment. But we should be sensitive to the possibility that another might be made uncomfortable by such behavior. If there is any question about how another may feel, ask first (e.g., "May I give you a hug?"). This is simply part of our responsibility as members of a caring community of Friends.

### **WHAT TO DO IF YOU EXPERIENCE OR OBSERVE POSSIBLE HARASSMENT**

- **If you feel harassed** by the comments or behavior of another person at Homewood Meeting, and if you feel able, you can tell that person clearly and respectfully that you find their behavior objectionable or hurtful and ask them to stop it. Of course, there are situations in which it is difficult to respond in that way in the moment.
- **Reporting incidents of harassment:** Homewood Friends Meeting has a Ministry and Counsel Committee (M&C) which is charged with caring for the spiritual life of the community. If you feel unable to confront the person, or find that the person repeats the objectionable behavior despite your request to stop it, you may approach M&C with your concern. You may request a meeting with one or more members of this committee by leaving a confidential note for the "Ministry and Counsel Committee" under the Homewood office door or in one of the contribution collection boxes or by speaking directly with a member of that committee. (M&C members introduce themselves each Sunday at the rise of meeting for worship). Be sure to include when/how to contact you on any note. You may choose to pursue either an informal or a formal procedure for dealing with the situation.

- **If you witness or are told about** a situation involving possible harassment, try to check it out with the person who appears to be experiencing the harassment: if the person feels uncomfortable about the behavior, encourage them to confront it or report it. If it is impossible to talk with the person, or if the person is not prepared to make a report and you are convinced that harassment occurred, then a report may be made directly to M&C.

## **WHAT THE MINISTRY AND COUNSEL COMMITTEE WILL DO IN RESPONSE TO A REPORTED INCIDENT OF HARASSMENT**

### **Informal procedure:**

If you feel embarrassed or offended by another's behavior, you may simply want an opportunity to discuss the experience with another Friend and think together about how to handle it. If so, one or more members of M&C can meet with you for a confidential discussion of the incident(s). If that discussion is sufficiently helpful, M&C will consider your concern to have reached closure; no further steps will be taken unless the committee determines that the nature of the complaint is serious enough to warrant further action, such as a formal procedure.

### **Formal procedure:**

If you wish a formal investigation and more assistance in dealing with the alleged harassment than that afforded by the informal procedure, you will be asked to submit a written, signed complaint. The complaint may be brief, but it should include names and a description of the objectionable behavior, the context, and your feelings. When such a complaint is received, two or more members of M&C will meet with you in confidence, discuss the alleged harassment with you, and investigate the complaint further as appropriate. Such investigation will normally include, but not necessarily be limited to, a meeting of the investigators with the alleged harasser. M&C reserves the right to make an independent decision to initiate the formal procedure in any case which it deems sufficiently serious to require such formal investigation and the possible consequences as listed below. In that event, both the complainant and the alleged harasser will be notified of the decision.

The investigating members of the committee will reach a decision as to the merits and gravity of the complaint and how to handle the situation. If M&C determines that harassment did indeed occur, possible consequences include:

- a) Asking the harasser to acknowledge and stop the offending behavior;
- b) Requiring the harasser to stay away from the person who experienced the harassment;
- c) Requiring the harasser to stay away from the person who experienced the harassment and to accept accompaniment by members of M&C or their designates at all times while on the Homewood Meeting premises or at activities of the Meeting held elsewhere;
- d) Requiring the harasser to stay away from Homewood Meeting.
- e) If indicated, counseling the victim to seek legal counsel.

The investigating team will communicate its decision and the action taken to the individual who submitted the formal complaint and to the full Ministry and Counsel Committee. Any decision to exclude a harasser from the Homewood Meeting community may be appealed by the harasser to M&C.

Complaints will be handled with confidentiality, discretion, and respect for all parties. Every effort will be made to protect persons making bona fide complaints from any kind of retaliatory action.

*(Approved in business meeting on 9/3/2017.)*