



Central Synagogue Anti-Harassment and Culture of Respect Policy

April 13, 2022

Central Synagogue is committed to a community in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. In addition to prohibiting harassment that would be illegal under federal, state, or local law, we are also committed to not tolerating behavior that is inconsistent with the values of Central Synagogue, even if such behavior would not violate the law.

A Respectful Community

Every individual associated with, or who comes into contact with Central Synagogue, must be treated with respect. Central Synagogue prohibits **any form of unwelcome behavior, even if such behavior may not violate the law, or is not yet sufficiently severe or persistent to rise to the level of creating a hostile environment or community. Additionally, Central Synagogue specifically** prohibits harassment directed towards any protected category as defined in the link below. Harassment on these bases are illegal under federal law and/or New York State and New York City law. **The policy covers in-person interactions and communications via calls, texts, emails, blog posts, or other social media.**

[PROTECTED CATEGORIES](#)

This policy applies to and protects congregant and community members, donors, interns and volunteers, consultants, contractors, vendors, and participants at programs sponsored by Central Synagogue. Central Synagogue also maintains an Anti-Harassment and Culture of Respect Policy for our full and part-time staff.

In a respectful community, individuals acknowledge and value the contributions of others, treat others with civility and courtesy, and engage in open and honest communication. Individuals do not embarrass or humiliate others, trivialize, or disregard the contributions of others, or engage in bullying behavior.

Prohibition of Harassment on Specific Bases

The following are some examples of behaviors based on these characteristics that are prohibited by this policy:

- **Unwelcome verbal conduct such as threats, epithets, derogatory comments or slurs, derogatory jokes, or objectionable teasing about an individual's dress or presentation**
- **Unwelcome media such as posting derogatory posters, photographs, cartoons, or drawings**
- **Unwelcome physical conduct such as assault or repeated unwanted touching.**

Harassment on the basis of sex may be overtly sexual, or it may not be sexual at all but still be unwelcome behavior based on an individual's status as male, female, or non-binary. **In addition to the unwelcome behaviors described above, here are some examples of sexual harassment prohibited by this policy (and in some cases, the law):**

- **Sexual assault;**
- **Touching a person's body or private parts, or touching an individual in a sexually suggestive manner, without the person's consent;**
- **Repeated unwanted sexual flirtations, advances or propositions;**
- **Leering or suggestive sexual gestures;**
- **Verbal abuse of a sexual nature, such as graphic verbal commentary about an individual's body, sexually degrading words to describe an individual, or sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations; and**
- **Retaliating or threatening retaliation against an individual after a negative response from that individual to sexual advances or other potentially harassing activities.**

Complaint & Investigation Procedures

Central Synagogue encourages reports of violations of this policy as soon as possible after a violation has occurred.

If you experience or witness any of the types of behavior outlined in this policy, we encourage you to immediately submit an incident report. You may do so by contacting the President of the Board of Trustees, at president@censyn.org, Central Synagogue's Executive Director at ed@censyn.org, or through [Central's anonymous reporting portal](#). Individuals can submit through the portal anonymously or can identify themselves within the submission. Claims submitted through the portal will be reviewed in a timely fashion and Central will conduct a fair and thorough investigation into reports of behavior that violate this policy. Central Synagogue will keep the investigation confidential to the greatest extent possible, consistent with a fair and full investigation.

If an investigation reveals a violation of this policy by a staff member, clergy, or congregant, Central Synagogue will take **corrective action with the individuals that is proportionate to the prohibited behavior**. Proportionality means that the corrective action may include, for

example, an oral warning, a written warning, or suspension of membership. It may also include coaching and training for the individual found to have engaged in the prohibited behavior.

Referring Investigations to an Outside Investigator

In certain instances, if appropriate, Central Synagogue may choose to conduct an independent investigation with a third party. Situations in which it is decided to take this step include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **There is a pattern of complaints against one person**
- **The circumstances are considered criminal under NYS and Federal laws**

Prohibition of Retaliation

This policy prohibits retaliation against any individual who has reported behavior detailed by this policy. It also prohibits retaliation against anyone who has participated in an investigation of the alleged misconduct or has filed a claim. To create a culture in which every individual is treated with respect and is protected from bullying and harassment, **individuals must feel safe to report the behavior.**

Retaliation may consist of harmful actions on a professional level (for example, any actions that may impact the workplace or the person who filed the claim) or on a social level (for example, ostracizing the person within the Central community). **All forms of retaliation are prohibited by this policy and Central Synagogue will take swift corrective action against any individual found to have engaged in retaliation.**

Interactions with Minors

A clergy person or any other staff should avoid any activity that puts them alone with, or in close physical contact with a congregant minor(s). If teaching a minor at Central or at a Central Synagogue event that is off-site, a meeting should happen in an office or room that includes a glass insert and/or the door should remain open at least 12 inches. All office doors at Central have glass inserts or have glass walls to create an atmosphere of transparency and safety for all parties involved. This rule is enforced in the Central Nursery School as well in all circumstances, including when a minor is in the restroom. We strongly encourage clergy or any other staff to use discretion and caution when alone with congregant minors in any social, non-synagogue settings, in part to ensure that there is no perception of inappropriate relationships.

Congregant Relationships with Clergy or Staff

Clergy relationships with our congregants are one of the most sacred trusts we hold. It is also a relationship that inherently includes a power dynamic because the congregant looks to the clergy for spiritual guidance. As a result of this power dynamic, dating between clergy and a congregant cannot be considered a situation of two consenting adults entering into a relationship and is prohibited by this policy. The clergy is responsible not only to ensure that

these relationships do not exist, but also not to engage in behavior that may give rise to the perception that the relationship exists. If a pre-existing relationship exists prior to a clergy joining Central, they are obligated to advise the Executive Director. Engaging in these relationships hurts not only the other person in the relationship, but the congregation itself.

Romantic relationships between staff and congregants are not prohibited. However, if a romantic relationship arises or pre-exists their joining Central, staff are expected to report the relationship to their supervisor(s). The timing of when to reveal a new relationship between staff and congregants is at the discretion of those in the relationship, but we encourage reporting as soon as those in the relationship feel it may impact the staff member's work, or the experience of congregants at Central. Central Synagogue will, if possible, eliminate the conflict by transferring or changing the responsibilities of the individual staff member or addressing the congregant conflict (e.g., the congregant switches to a different volunteer opportunity).

We all must work together to create the safe, respectful, diverse, and inclusive environment that reflects the core values of Central Synagogue.

For any questions about this policy, please contact our Membership Team at membership@censyn.org.

APPENDIX

New York State Division of Human Rights (NYSDHR)

The New York State Human Rights Law (NYSHRL) prohibits sexual harassment against employees, interns (paid or unpaid), and "non-employees," a category that includes contractors, subcontractors, vendors, consultants, and any other person who provides services under a contract. You can file a sexual harassment complaint under the NYSHRL with the NYSDHR or in New York State court.

Complaints with the NYSDHR may be filed within one year of the sexual harassment. If you did not file at the NYSDHR, you can sue directly in state court under the NYSHRL within three years of the alleged harassment.

You may not file with the NYSDHR if you have already filed a NYSHRL complaint in state court. If you filed an administrative complaint with the NYSDHR, the NYSDHR will file the complaint with the EEOC to preserve the right to proceed in federal court.

Complaining internally to the organization does not extend your time to file with the NYSDHR or in state court. The one year or three years is counted from the date of the most recent sexual harassment incident.

You do not need an attorney to file a complaint with the NYSDHR and there is no cost to file a complaint.

The NYSDHR will investigate your complaint and determine whether there is probable cause to believe that discrimination has occurred. Probable cause cases are sent to a public hearing before an administrative law judge. If discrimination is found after a hearing, the NYSDHR has the power to award relief. Under the NYSHRL, courts may award back pay, front pay, compensatory damages, a civil monetary penalty, and attorney's fees.

The NYSDHR's main office is at One Fordham Plaza, Fourth Floor, Bronx, NY 10458. You can also contact the NYSDHR by phone (1-888-392-3644) or email (info@dhr.ny.gov). The NYSDHR's website is dhr.ny.gov/complaint. The website has a complaint form that can be downloaded, filled out, notarized, and mailed to the NYSDHR. The website also contains contact information for the NYSDHR's regional offices.

New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR)

The New York City Human Rights Law (NYCHRL) prohibits sexual harassment against employees in New York City. You can file a complaint of sexual harassment under the NYCHRL with the New York City Commission on Human Rights (NYCCHR) or in New York State court. You must file your complaint with the NYCCHR or in state court within three years of the alleged harassment. Under the NYCHRL, courts may award back pay, front pay, compensatory and punitive damages, and attorney's fees, expert fees, and costs.

The NYCCHR's main office is at 40 Rector Street, 10th Floor, New York, NY 10006. Contact the NYCCHR by phone (718-722-3131), or by website: www.nyc.gov/html/cchr/html/home/home.shtml.

Other Localities

Other localities may have their own laws protecting individuals from sexual harassment. Contact the county, city, or town in which you live to find out if such a law exists. If the harassment involves unwanted physical touching, coerced physical confinement, or coerced sex acts, the conduct may constitute a crime. Contact the local police department.