

Seattle Aikikai Code of Conduct

Defining our Values Regarding Discrimination,
Sexual Misconduct, and Abuse

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Objective

Seattle Aikikai believes everyone has the right to practice Aikido free from discrimination, harassment, and abuse. As a community, we are committed to actively addressing ableism, ageism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, transphobia, and all forms of misconduct outlined in this document.

We expect all dojo members to act with integrity, honor the dignity of others, treat others with mutual respect, and hold themselves to the highest level of ethical behavior.

We recognize that each individual brings their unique identities, perspectives, and experiences to the dojo and that it is essential to be aware of how we present ourselves to others both in and outside of the dojo. The terms below are foundational to our collective responsibility in creating a harmonious training environment.

Most grievance policies are consulted after an incident has occurred. We have clearly outlined terms and our expectations so that we may be proactive and provide a healthy and transparent culture where potential issues involving discrimination and abuse are clearly understood and able to be openly addressed before escalation occurs.

To achieve our goal of providing high-quality, safe, accessible, and equitable environments for the practice and teaching of Aikido, this document:

- Defines discrimination, sexual misconduct, abuse, and other related terms (See [Terms](#))
- Outlines policies intended to prevent sexual misconduct, abuse, or discrimination (See [Definitions of Prohibited Behaviors](#))
- Clarifies expectations for ethical behavior for both general members and teachers (See [Ethical Expectations](#))
- Outlines specific guidelines for interacting with [minors](#) (See [Minor Students](#), [Prohibited Behaviors with Minor Students](#), and [Appendix C: Behavior with Minors](#))
- Defines the process for filing complaints, investigating claims, and issuing appropriate disciplinary measures in the case of violations (See [Grievance Reporting Process](#) and [Grievance Process Flowchart](#))
- Provides resources to support survivors and empower the dojo community in identifying and challenging sexual misconduct, abuse, or discrimination (See [Appendix A: Resources](#))

The [Ethics Committee](#) will review and update this policy yearly and submit proposed changes to the Board of Directors for approval (See [Appendix B: Seattle Aikikai Ethics Committee](#)).

Scope

This policy applies to all members, teachers, and visitors at all Seattle Aikikai locations. This policy also applies to Seattle Aikikai members and instructors who attend Aikido events outside the dojo, such as seminars. Members at every level will be subject to discipline — up to and including expulsion — for violating this policy.

Members are prohibited from harassing or mistreating others at any time. Reports of misconduct outside of the dojo may also be considered on a case-by-case basis if they affect the dojo community or the training environment.

Terms

Understanding the following terms is critical for creating a safe training environment for all:

Agency: The capacity of individuals to act independently and make their own free choices. A person's agency can be limited or influenced by many factors.

Consent: The knowing, voluntary, and clear permission in response to another person's proposition. If someone agrees to an activity under pressure of intimidation or threat, or where unequal power dynamics exist, it is not consent. Consent cannot be given by individuals who are underage, intoxicated or incapacitated by drugs or alcohol, or asleep or unconscious.

Hierarchy: The classification or ranking of people based on ability or economic, social, or professional standing. Ranking systems (dan and kyu ranks) are an example of a hierarchy in martial arts dojos and are rooted in values of respect, discipline, and order. They often influence the organization of dojo leadership and teachers, and determine how instructors and students interact. While hierarchies are not inherently negative (they can encourage positive behaviors such as self-regulation, commitment, and supporting student's learning objectives) they can create unhealthy competition and power structures.

Positionality: The systemic ways in which social position and access to power shape identities, agency, and access to resources. An example of this in Aikido is the sempai/kohai (senior/junior) relationship. This positionality ideally involves mentorship, but it has the potential for abuse.

Power: The ability to decide, direct, or influence behaviors and outcomes for oneself or others. Power is relational and reinforced by conventions, history, institutions, positions, access to resources, and other social structures. It allows dominant groups greater access and control over resources. Some examples of social mechanisms through which power operates include citizenship, education, heterosexism, patriarchy, wealth, and whiteness.

Definitions of Prohibited Behaviors

Abuse

Any action that intentionally causes harm or injures another person. Abuse takes many forms, and includes:

Physical abuse

Acts or incidents which may result in bodily injury. Examples of physical abuse in a dojo include using overly aggressive techniques or not stopping when asked by a partner.

Assault

Attempts to inflict bodily injury upon another, any unlawful touching with criminal intent, and putting another in apprehension of harm whether or not the actor intends to inflict or is incapable of it.

Emotional abuse

Verbal behavior, harassment, or other actions that may result in emotional or behavioral stress or injury.

Harassment

Unwelcome conduct that is severe or pervasive enough to create a hostile or offensive environment.

Sexual Misconduct

All sex and gender-based discrimination and harassment (including sexual harassment, sexual assault, sexual exploitation, domestic violence, stalking, fondling, invading another person's sexual privacy, and all other sexual offenses as outlined by WAC 504-26-221). Sexual Misconduct is a type of violence that uses power, control, or intimidation to harm another. It occurs in the absence of consent.

- **Sexual assault:** Sexual contact with another person without or that exceeds that person's consent, including intentionally touching the intimate parts of another person's clothed or unclothed body, causing another person to touch their own or another's body without the consent of all parties, or penetration, no matter how slight, with any body part or object.
- **Sexual harassment:** Involves unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct based on sex that creates an offensive, uncomfortable, and unsafe environment.

Child Abuse

Any abuse and neglect including injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, negligent treatment, or maltreatment of a child by any person under circumstances that harm a child's health, welfare, and safety.

Bullying

Intentional and repeated negative actions that show a lack of empathy and result from an imbalance of power. Bullying can occur between adults, between minors, or between minors and adults. It includes threats or intimidation, attacking someone physically or verbally, and deliberate exclusion.

Bullying will not be tolerated. Such behavior will be stopped immediately if witnessed by the supervising teacher.

Bullying of a child by an adult must be reported immediately. If repeated bullying of youth by youth is witnessed, parents will be contacted and the youth exhibiting the behavior may be asked to leave the dojo.

Discrimination

The unequal treatment of members of groups based on race, social class, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, physical ability, religion, and other categories. Discrimination happens at the individual, institutional, and societal levels. It is often associated with abuse of power and positionality. Discrimination often includes ableism, classism, homophobia, racism, sexism, ageism, transphobia, or xenophobia.

- **Blatant discrimination** consists of unequal and harmful treatment that is intentional, visible, and easily documented.
- **Covert discrimination** consists of unequal and harmful treatment that is hidden, purposeful, and often maliciously motivated and stems from conscious attempts to ensure failure.
- **Cultural discrimination** is when, within a culture or organization, one group retains the power to form and define cultural values by maintaining dominance over other groups, and values the characteristics and contributions of the dominant group over those of minority groups. It rewards values that correspond to its views while punishing those that do not by marginalizing minority groups (such as ethnic or cultural groups).
- **Institutionalized discrimination** is the unjust and discriminatory mistreatment of an individual or group by organizations such as governments and corporations, financial institutions, public institutions (such as schools, police forces, healthcare centers), and other social entities.
- **Interpersonal discrimination** involves the unfair treatment of another person due to stereotypical beliefs and evaluations because of the person's group membership.
- **Organizational discrimination** is the manifestation of institutional discrimination in the context of a particular organization.

Populations

Minors

- Students younger than 13 years old
- Students 13-18 years old

Adults

- Adults 18 and older
- Adult instructors
- Visiting instructors

Ethical Expectations

All students are expected to uphold the following ethical expectations. These expectations shall apply to all members, teachers, and visitors at Seattle Aikikai:

Instructors

Instructors at Seattle Aikikai are guided by a deep conviction of the worth and dignity of others, and advancing the art of Aikido. They recognize their unique roles and responsibilities as teachers. They are not above accountability. If any member feels that a teacher has violated this Code of Conduct, or if they feel that a teacher is not sufficiently holding others accountable, they may take action as outlined in the [Grievance Reporting Process](#) section of this document.

Teachers shall:

- Uphold the ethical guidelines outlined in this document without exception
- Encourage and support the learning process of their students and demonstrate the best possible standards of the discipline and art of Aikido
- Make every effort to ensure that their evaluation of students reflects the true merit of the student
- Foster an inclusive environment free of discrimination in which diversity is respected
- Act to halt prohibited conduct including harassment, exploitation, and abuse
- Recognize and be sensitive to the unique power imbalance of the student-teacher relationship

- Take the [Safesport](#) online training or the Seattle Public Schools volunteer training for Preventing Sexual Abuse in Schools (the fee for required training will be covered by the dojo. Visiting instructors are exempted from training);
- All youth program instructors must pass a criminal background check;

Teachers shall not:

- Exploit the trust and dependency of any student, use a relationship with a student for personal gain, or engage in relationships with students (e.g., business, personal, or

sexual relationships) that could impair the professional judgment of the teacher or compromise the integrity of their instruction

- Make comments, gestures, or physical contact of a sexual nature with any student. Sexual misconduct will not be tolerated under any circumstances.

Minor Students

Behavior concerning [Minors](#) deserves special mention due to the legal, emotional, and physical dependency of youth that puts them at higher risk of exploitation and abuse.

Abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct towards minors will not be tolerated under any circumstances and will be dealt with at the highest level of severity, including suspension or expulsion of the dojo member.

Any person who witnesses or suspects sexual misconduct, abuse, discrimination, and harassment concerning minors should immediately report it to an instructor or a member of the Ethics Committee.

[Grievance Reports](#) concerning minors will be handled with the utmost seriousness and timeliness, including prompt reporting to parents and/or law enforcement if criminal activity is suspected.

All youth instructors will undergo criminal history checks via the Washington State Patrol. Class assistants, under supervision from a designated instructor, do not need to undergo background checks.

Prohibited behaviors with Minor students

The following is a partial list of behaviors that are prohibited when interacting with minor students. For the complete list, see [Appendix C: Behavior with Minors](#).

- Frequently touching a particular minor
- Making comments about a minor's body to the student or others
- Being alone with a minor in a room with the door closed
- Having any minor sit on the lap of an adult
- Being alone in a dressing room with a minor*
- Using offensive or foul language
- Discussing sex or adult topics
- Being inebriated in the presence of minors

**Minors are encouraged to come to class in their uniforms or use the individual dressing room. If they are in the shared dressing room, all adults must wait outside the dressing room and prevent others from entering while they are changing.*

Communication

Every dojo member has the right to feel safe. To create a trustworthy and supportive environment, Seattle Aikikai is committed to open, non-hierarchical communication between community members, regardless of rank, position, experience, or standing. Dojo members and members of the wider community (such as parents) are encouraged to share verbal or written feedback about the dojo in any area that affects their emotional and physical well-being in the dojo, including environment, behavior, institutional structures, or activities.

General Feedback

General Feedback is different from [Grievance Reports](#). It is low-impact and can consist of comments, suggestions, notifications, questions, or concerns. Dojo members may give feedback in any form, including but not limited to:

- A written note
- Conversation with a senior student or instructor (it should be clear that feedback is being given)
- Email info@seattleaikikai.com, or send an email via the contact form on our website

Grievance Reporting Process

Any student may file a [Grievance Report](#). Reporting abuse or discrimination is serious, requires immediate action, and has a specific process. Grievance Reports should be made to a member of the [Ethics Committee](#) or an instructor.

Any person experiencing abuse may report a grievance by taking any of these steps (see the [Grievance Process Flowchart](#)):

- Speak out about the unwanted behavior at the time. Ensuring that an instructor is aware that the comments go beyond general feedback and constitute a grievance report
- Contact the Dojo Chief Instructor verbally or in writing with a grievance report
- Contact any member of the Ethics Committee verbally or in writing with a grievance report

Confidentiality

Except in cases of criminal activity or grievances involving a minor, notifications and reports are kept confidential among those on the Ethics Committee and any investigators. Parents will always be informed of any grievance involving their minor child.

Retaliation

Retaliation of a dojo member against another for submitting a Grievance Report will not be tolerated. If retaliation is reported and confirmed by the Ethics Committee, the perpetrator will be suspended from the dojo until the Grievance Resolution process is complete.

Grievance Reports

Grievance Reports are actionable reports that are initiated by a dojo member when that person feels that they or someone else is experiencing abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct at any level.

Grievance reports will initiate an [Investigation Process](#) directed by the [Ethics Committee](#). The [Grievance Process Flowchart](#) outlines the possible courses of action that will be initiated after the Ethics Committee is contacted.

A Grievance Report may be verbal or written. If an instructor or senior student is notified of a possible Code of Conduct violation, they are required to notify the Ethics Committee immediately.

Even if a Grievance Report is not submitted, notification of possible Code of Conduct violations is encouraged.

Investigation Process

After a [Grievance Report](#) has been submitted:

1. The [Ethics Committee](#) will discuss the reported grievance separately with both the notifier and the person(s) accused. If a reported issue involves a member of the Ethics Committee, that member will be required to leave the committee until the grievance is resolved. If criminal activity involving minors is suspected, it will be reported immediately to parents. Reports to law enforcement by the dojo, the parents, or both, will follow.
2. The Ethics Committee will collect incident details from all parties (such as the time, date, nature of the incident(s), and names of any witnesses).
3. The Ethics Committee will review the Code of Conduct to evaluate potential misconduct.
4. The Ethics Committee will provide regular (weekly or twice-monthly) updates separately to the involved parties until the matter is resolved.
5. The Ethics Committee, if necessary, will ask that the person(s) accused attend classes at a different time and location than the notifier.
6. If retaliation is reported and confirmed by the Ethics Committee, the perpetrator will be suspended from the dojo until the [Resolution Process](#) is complete.
7. If the scope of the issue exceeds the abilities of the Ethics Committee, an outside expert such as a conflict resolution non-profit will be contacted.

Resolution Process

The Resolution Process will:

- Provide an investigation and accountability report to all parties.
- Recommend action based on the results of the investigation. These actions should be commensurate with and scalable to the severity and/or scope of the misconduct and could include the following:
 - A formal warning issued by the dojo leadership
 - Placement of interventions to allow the parties to continue to practice
 - Disciplinary action may include
 - Require training at the accused's expense
 - Temporary suspension
 - Permanent expulsion
 - Mediation/reconciliation process between involved parties
 - Reconciliation process for dojo community

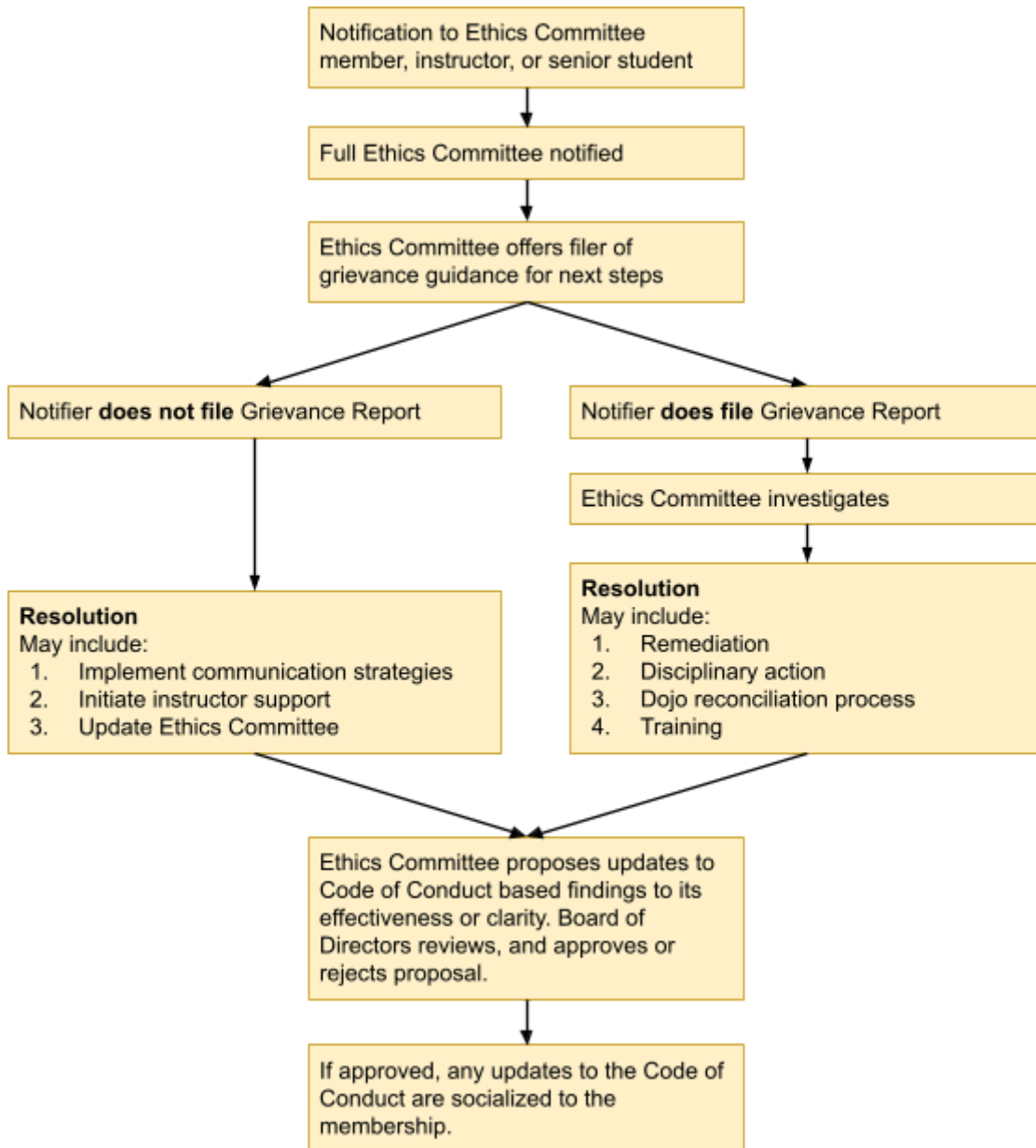
The procedures available under this policy do not preempt or supersede any legal procedures or remedies otherwise available to a victim of (sexual) harassment under local, state, or federal law.

Socialization of the Code of Conduct

To reinforce this Code of Conduct, Seattle Aikikai will ensure that:

- a link to this document is added to the waiver on sign-up;
- this document is made available to the membership on the website;
- this document is included in any welcome materials for new members;
- all instructors read and sign the policy agreement;
- and [The Dojo Ethics Committee Purpose and Role](#) and contact information are posted in the changing rooms.

Grievance Process Flowchart



References

- [Legal Information Institute. \(n.d.\). Abuse. Cornell Law School.](#)
- [Legal Information Institute. \(n.d.\). Consent. Cornell Law School.](#)
- [Seattle Police Department. \(2023\). Understanding sexual assault and consent. City of Seattle.](#)
- [Tacoma Community College Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee. \(2022\). TCC Common Language Glossary. Tacoma Community College.](#)
- [United Nations \(n.d.\) What is Domestic Abuse?](#)
- [U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission. \(n.d.\). Harassment.](#)
- [U.S. Equal Opportunity Commission. \(n.d.\). Sexual Harassment.](#)
- [University of North Carolina at Pembroke. \(n.d.\). Sexual Misconduct Offenses – Definitions.](#)
- [University of Washington. \(2023\) Sexual Assault Resources.](#)
- [Washington Office of Public Instruction. \(n.d.\). Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying \(HIB\).](#)
- [Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. \(2018\). Sexual Harassment Model Policy.](#)
- [Washington State Department of Social and Health Services. \(n.d.\). Types and Signs of Abuse.](#)
- [Washington State Legislature. \(2023\). Definitions \(WAC 246-320-010\).](#)
- [Washington State Legislature. \(2022\). Definition—Penalties \(RCW 9A.46.020\).](#)
- [Washington State Legislature. \(2023\). Sexual assault \(WAC 478-121-150\).](#)
- [Washington State Legislature. \(2023\) Sexual Misconduct \(WAC 504-26-221\).](#)
- [Washington State Legislature. \(2023\). Sexual misconduct—Definition \(WAC 181-88-060\).](#)

Appendix A: Resources

If you are in danger, call 911

Sexual assault resources

- [King County Sexual Assault Resource Center](#) (888) 998-6423
- [National Sexual Assault Hotline](#) (800) 656-4673
- [UW Medicine Center for Sexual Assault & Traumatic Stress](#) (206) 744-1600
- [Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Organization](#) (800) 656-4673
- [Washington's Victim Support Services Advocates](#) (800) 346-7555 (9 am – 5 pm PST)
- [Washington Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs](#)
 - [Northwest Network](#)
Serves queer and trans survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual assault, domestic violence, hate violence, stalking and harassment.
24-Hour Hotline (866) 427-4747
 - [Refugee Women's Alliance](#)
Provides holistic wrap-around services to help refugee and immigrant women. Services are available in over 50 languages and dialects.
(206) 721-0243
 - [Harborview Abuse And Trauma Center](#)
24 Hour Hotline (206) 744-1600
 - [Abused Deaf Women's Advocacy Services](#)
Assists people who are survivors of Domestic and Sexual Violence. Services are free of charge and available to people who are Deaf, DeafBlind, or hard of hearing and are residents of King, Pierce, or Snohomish County.
24-hour video Hotline (206) 812-1001
 - [Asian Counseling And Referral Services](#)
Multi-service organization offering services to support Asian Pacific Islanders and other under-served communities.
(206) 695-7600
 - [Api Chaya](#)
A survivor-led organization focused on serving survivors of sexual violence, human trafficking, and domestic violence from Pacific Islander, Native Hawaiian, Asian, and South Asian communities.
(206) 467-9976
(877) 922-4292
 - [Mother Nation](#)
A 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that delivers social and cultural healing services for Native women
(206) 722-2321

Local shelters and resources for people experiencing domestic violence

- Legal issues in King County: Call 2-1-1 (weekdays 8 am to 6 pm) to be referred to a legal aid provider.

- [Mary's Place](#) Office phone: 206-621-8474
Women's Day Center: 1830 9th Ave., Seattle, WA 98101 (7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Mon. - Fri.)
Families looking for shelter tonight: 206-245-1026
- [New Beginnings](#) PO Box 75125, Seattle, WA 98175. Crisis: 206-737-0242

Legal Resources

- [Northwest Justice Project](#) NJP provides legal assistance to eligible low-income families and individuals needing help with civil (non-criminal) legal problems in Washington state.
- [Legal Voice](#) Secures legal protections for women and families and a variety of tools and resources. (206) 682-9522

Healthcare Resources

- [Planned Parenthood Health Center](#) (multiple locations in Seattle)

LGBTQ+ community resources

- [Rainbow Center](#) Resources and safe space for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, two-spirit, and allied (LGBTQ2SA) community.
- [The NW Network of Bi, Trans, Lesbian, and Gay Survivors of Abuse](#) Offers a wide range of support to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, and questioning youth and young adults (ages 13-24) around issues of violence and crime, such as dating violence, bullying, hate violence, physical and sexual assault, exploitation, theft, police harassment and experiences in the sex trades.
- [Legal and Counsel for Youth and Children](#) Empowers youth by helping them understand and engage in complex legal systems, influencing court decisions that will impact their lives and their families forever. Focus areas include child welfare, juvenile court, immigrant youth and families, and youth homelessness.
- [Trans Lifeline](#) (877) 565-8860
- [Trevor Project](#) (866) 488-7386

Resources addressing racism and microaggressions

- [Anti-racism resources](#)

Appendix B: Seattle Aikikai Ethics Committee

Purpose and role

The main purpose of the Ethics Committee is to uphold the Code of Conduct, hear and review grievances from members and the community, offer guidance, and determine resolution actions. It follows the procedures outlined in this document in the instance of a grievance or complaint of abuse, discrimination, or sexual misconduct by any member.

Grievances may be addressed to any member of the Ethics Committee, who will bring the complaint to the full committee. If a report involves a member of the Ethics Committee, that member will be required to leave the committee until the grievance is resolved.

The committee will hear testimony, written or otherwise, by the person(s) directly involved in grievances, mediate voluntary actions by the parties, and make recommendations for resolution.

The Ethics Committee understands the sensitive nature of reporting misconduct and respects and supports the emotional and physical safety of survivors. Members are committed to impartiality and all deliberations on any grievance, whether active or not, will be held in the strictest of confidence. [Grievance Reports](#) concerning minors require prompt reporting to parents and/or law enforcement if criminal activity is suspected.

Composition

The Ethics Committee consists of a Chief Instructor and three appointed members from the community. Appointed members should represent diverse backgrounds (of rank, gender, race, and age), and at least one of the members should represent the wider community, such as a parent or partner of a member.

Terms

Committee members serve a term with a minimum of one year and a maximum of three years.

Appointment process

Committee members are appointed at the annual membership meeting.

Duties

- Serve as a trusted dojo liaison for communication, guidance, and grievance reporting
- Notify the full Ethics Committee in cases of reported or suspected Code of Conduct violations
- Participate in the grievance investigation and resolution processes
- Participate in an annual review of the Code of Conduct
- Support the transition of new members to the committee

Members and contact information

The contact information for the current members of the Dojo Ethics Committee (four members plus an administrator who oversees the response process) is posted on the dojo bulletin board, and the communication process is socialized regularly throughout the year and in annual dojo membership meetings.

Appendix C: Behavior with [Minors](#)

Adults in the dojo are expected to maintain professional boundaries with minor students. Teachers, assistants, and other dojo members are required to maintain an atmosphere conducive to learning through consistently and fairly applied standards and boundaries.

Prohibited behaviors

- Frequently touching a particular minor
- Making comments about a minor's body to the student or others
- Being alone with a minor in a room with the door closed or locked
- Having any minor sit on the lap of an adult
- Being alone in a dressing room with a minor
- Offering to mentor a minor privately after hours
- Overly personal cards, notes, emails, or other communication
- Teasing with sexual innuendo
- Texting a minor
- Using offensive or foul language
- Discussing sex or adult topics
- Being inebriated in the presence of minors
- Going offsite, including offering them a ride home
- Offering or imposing a front hug
- Singling a student out for special favors or attention

Acceptable behaviors

- Friendly comments
- Compliments that are not overly personal
- Offers of assistance
- Pat on the shoulder in front of others (however, be mindful of the student's boundaries and remember that not every student likes to be touched)
- Adults may offer high fives or fist bumps
- Be consistent, and offer the same interactions to all students