

## Code of Professional Conduct at Officially Sanctioned AHA Activities

The AHA annual meeting and other officially sanctioned AHA activities are convened for the purposes of professional development and scholarly and educational interchange in the spirit of free inquiry and free expression. Harassment of colleagues, students, or other conference participants at these events undermines the principle of equity at the heart of these professional forums and is inconsistent with those principles of free inquiry and free expression. Consequently, harassment is considered by the AHA to be a serious form of professional misconduct.

Ethics and norms outlined in the AHA's *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*, along with the principles articulated in this policy, apply as standards of behavior and interaction at all AHA sanctioned activities.

### Purpose

The AHA is committed to creating and maintaining a safe, welcoming, and harassment-free environment for all participants in the Association's activities, regardless of their actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, nationality, ability, socioeconomic status, veteran status, age, or religion.

All members and participants, including employees, contractors, vendors, volunteers and guests, are expected to engage in consensual and respectful behavior and to preserve AHA's standard of professionalism at all times. The following Code of Professional Conduct pertains to all venues where officially sanctioned AHA conferences, meetings, and other activities occur, whether in person, by telephone, or through electronic communication. It complements, but does not replace the *Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct*.

### Expected Behavior

- All participants are expected to abide by this Code of Professional Conduct at all officially sanctioned AHA activities.
- All participants are expected to abide by the norms of professional respect that are necessary to promote the conditions for free academic interchange.
- If you witness potential harm to a participant, be diplomatically proactive in helping to mitigate or avoid that harm.
- Alert staff, security personnel, or law enforcement if you see a situation in which someone might be in imminent physical danger.

## **Unacceptable Behavior**

- Persistent and unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy.
- Persistent and unwelcome solicitation of emotional or physical intimacy accompanied by real or implied threat of professional harm.
- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, derogatory or demeaning speech or actions by any participant in an officially sanctioned AHA activity.
- Prejudicial actions or comments related to actual or perceived sex, gender, gender expression, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, race, ethnicity, ability, socioeconomic status, age, or religion that coerce others, foment broad hostility, or otherwise undermine professional equity or the principles of free academic exchange. Harassment might also include unprofessional and unethical behaviors, such as intentionally misgendering someone, refusing to use a person's preferred pronouns, or making inappropriate remarks about a person's gender identity or sexual orientation.
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following.
- Harassing photography or recording without permission.
- Sustained disruption of presentations or other events; including yelling at or threatening speakers (verbally or physically).
- Physical assault (including unwelcome touch or groping).
- Real or implied threat of physical harm.

Unacceptable behavior includes sexual harassment. The AHA has no tolerance for sexual harassment in any setting. Sexual harassment is behavior (speech or actions) in formal or informal settings that demeans, humiliates, or threatens an individual on the basis of their sex, gender, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment can also take nonsexual forms and includes discriminatory remarks or actions based on an individual's sex, gender, gender expression or sexual orientation. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal comment or physical conduct of a sexual nature, including situations in which the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed promise of professional reward for complying; or the request or conduct involves any implied or expressed threat of reprisal or denial of opportunity for refusing to comply; or the request or conduct results in what reasonably may be perceived as a hostile or intimidating environment. Such examples are illustrative, not exhaustive. Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships without discriminatory effect. It refers to behavior that reasonably situated persons would regard as not welcome and as personally intimidating, hostile, or offensive.

According to U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) guidelines, the victim of harassment can be anyone affected by the offensive conduct, not just the individual at whom the conduct is directed.

Retaliation against a complainant is also a violation of this policy.

### **AHA Responsibilities**

This policy and the structure for addressing violations will be clearly and prominently displayed on the AHA website. All participants in the annual meeting and other officially sanctioned AHA activities will be required to acknowledge this policy and their willingness to abide by it as part of the registration process.

The executive director will provide an annual report of aggregated data, which will be circulated to the full Council and made available to the membership upon request.

The AHA will maintain a team to receive complaints from and provide resources for any participant in the annual meeting or other AHA sanctioned activity who has experienced or witnessed violations of this policy. The contact information for team members will be made available on the AHA website and in registration materials. Team members will be on-site at the annual meeting and available for other AHA sanctioned activities. A member of this team can describe the reporting procedure and can outline available resources. Neither the team nor any other AHA official can provide legal advice to individuals who make reports under this policy.

Reporting an incident of unacceptable behavior does not obligate the reporter to pursue any further action. Depending upon the severity and nature of the report, and in compliance with local, state and federal law, the AHA may be compelled to contact law enforcement and/or address the report with AHA officials or the AHA Council.

### **Procedures for Addressing Violations of the Code of Professional Conduct**

Any participant of officially sanctioned AHA activities may pursue a complaint according to the procedures outlined in the [Procedures for Addressing Violations of the AHA Code of Professional Conduct](#).