

Dharma Rain Zen Center

Sexual Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy Statement

Dharma Rain Zen Center (DRZC) is committed to providing an environment free of all forms of harassment including sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. As a Buddhist institution, this connects with our observations of the Precepts. The Third Precept of Buddhism says, "Do not misuse sexuality."

Dharma Rain seeks to maintain an environment where there is no discrimination on the basis of sex, gender expression, or sexual orientation. Any form of harassment or misconduct that insults the dignity of others and impedes their religious practice and spiritual growth is unacceptable. Sexual harassment in any context is a matter of particular concern to a religious community in which students, staff, other practitioners, and teachers are related by strong bonds of spiritual interdependence and trust.

Definitions

Sexual harassment refers to any unwelcome, unwanted, or inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature, whether verbal, physical, or visual, that creates a hostile, intimidating, or offensive environment for individuals to fully participate in all activities of the Sangha. This can also relate to threats regarding employment status at Dharma Rain or participation in spiritual practice at Dharma Rain. Behaviors include, but are not limited to:

- Unwanted sexual advances, propositions, or requests for sexual favors.
- Verbal comments, jokes, or remarks of a sexual nature that create discomfort or humiliation.
- Displaying sexually suggestive images, videos, or materials.
- Using one's position of authority to coerce or pressure individuals into engaging in sexual activities or behaviors against their will.

Everyone participating in Dharma Rain activities or community in any capacity has the right to be free from all forms of harassment. Continued expression of sexual or romantic interest after being informed that such interest is unwelcome is a form of sexual harassment, and possibly misuse of authority as well.

Sexual misconduct involves any non-consensual or inappropriate sexual behavior, which may include, but is not limited to:

- Non-consensual sexual contact or touching.

- Sexual exploitation, manipulation, or abuse of power dynamics to engage in sexual activities.
- Sexual assault, rape, or any form of sexual violence.
- Engaging in sexual activities with vulnerable individuals who are incapable of giving informed and voluntary consent, such as minors, individuals with diminished mental capacity, or those under the influence of substances.

Employees and Mandatory Reporting

For the purposes of this policy, an "employee" refers to any individual who receives compensation from Dharma Rain Zen Center, regardless of full-time, part-time, or contractor status. This includes administrative staff, paid teachers, maintenance personnel, and any other compensated positions.

All employees of Dharma Rain Zen Center are mandatory reporters under this policy. This means:

- Employees must report any witnessed or reported incidents of sexual harassment or misconduct to the Abbot, a transmitted teacher, or a member of the Ethics Council within 24 hours.
- Employees must report any disclosure of sexual harassment or misconduct shared with them in confidence, while informing the person making the disclosure of this obligation before they share sensitive information.
- Failure to report known or suspected violations of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.
- Employees who report violations in good faith will be protected from retaliation, even if the investigation determines no violation occurred.

Dharma Rain Zen Center is committed to maintaining compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws regarding workplace conduct, in addition to upholding our ethical standards and spiritual precepts.

Additional considerations

Consensual sexual relationships require deeper awareness. Consensual sexual relationships with new people (within six months of their first visit to DRZC) are prohibited. This specifically applies to Temple Officers, Teachers, Team Leaders, and Residents, and is grounds for a teacher dismissal, loss of residency, or release from leadership position. One reason that this restriction exists is for the safety of a new student who might be searching, in a vulnerable state, or in crisis. This vulnerability should not be exploited. Another reason is to allow a new person to settle into practice and determine if DRZC is the place for them. A sexual relationship could be a distraction to this process.

Sexual harassment of a student by a teacher obstructs teaching and is harmful. Dharma teachers are not to engage in sexual behavior with their students and such behavior is considered a misuse of authority, responsibility and sexuality. Sexual harassment and sexual misconduct are violations of the basic trust upon which the relationship of teacher and student is founded. If a teacher or a student feels at risk of violating these guidelines, the teacher is responsible for suspending the teacher-student relationship and seeking counsel with a Dharma Rain teacher of senior standing.

Complaint and Conflict Process

Because of the wide range of issues, conflicts, and other difficulties that may arise in community, we strive to find the most appropriate way to respond to each particular situation.

Concerns about or allegations of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct may be reported to the Abbot, a transmitted teacher, an ordained monk, or a member of the Ethics Council.

Parties are encouraged to work together informally to resolve conflicts. Please see Appendix A of the Dharma Rain Zen Center Ethics Council document for a suggested process to work with this type of difficulty.

A formal Complaint Process may be an appropriate remedy when it is not possible, or has not been possible, to resolve the issue in less formal ways, especially when the issue has involved harmful or unethical conduct, such as sexual harassment and sexual misconduct.

The Ethics Council is responsible for hearing formal complaints and ethics violations. The Ethics Council has a defined process for submission of complaints, review and declaration of findings. That process can be found in the Ethics Council governing document.

In addition, Dharma Rain's Safe Environment Policy and Procedures clearly defines the procedures and mandatory reporting requirements for sexual misconduct regarding minors, the elderly, and individuals with diminished mental capacity. If it is determined that criminal misconduct has occurred, appropriate authorities may also be notified.

Revision history:

- Revised by DRZC Board of Directors, March 2025
- Approved by Dharma Rain Board of Directors on September 21, 2023