

ROCHESTER ZEN CENTER

Sexual Harassment Policy Statement

Adopted by the Board of Trustees October 16, 1993;
revised by the Board, effective February 29, 2012

The Third Precept of Buddhism is, "Not to misuse sexuality, but to be caring and responsible." As a religious institution, the Rochester Zen Center seeks to maintain an environment where bigotry and intolerance, including discrimination on the basis of sex or sexual orientation, have no place and where any form of coercion and harassment that insults the dignity of others and impedes their religious practice and spiritual growth is not tolerated. Sexual harassment in any context is reprehensible, and 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.

Sexual harassment most frequently occurs when one person has some power and authority over another. It encompasses several different types of behavior, including sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Such unwanted sexual attention constitutes "sexual harassment" when submission to such conduct (1) involves a stated or implicit threat to the victim's employment status, membership in the Center or involvement in Center functions (e.g., attendance at sesshin or dokusan), (2) substantially interferes with the victim's spiritual practice, (3) creates an offensive environment, or (4) is intimidating or humiliating to the person.

Sexual harassment may occur between two staff members, as well as between a teacher or staff member and a member of the Sangha. Sexual harassment of a student by a teacher obstructs the Teaching and is harmful in other ways as well. It is a violation of the basic trust upon which the relationship of teacher and student is founded. Similarly, teachers and others in a position of authority should avoid comments that discriminate against persons on the basis of sex or sexual orientation or that refer to the sexuality of a person or a group in such a way as to create an intimidating or offensive environment. However, this statement is not meant to proscribe discussion of such matters as sex and sexuality.

Depending upon the nature and severity of the alleged misconduct, an allegation of sexual harassment may be handled either (1) directly by those involved, or (2) by an appropriate person in authority, such as the Abbot or Head of Zendo, (3) by the Ethics and Advisory Committee or (4) by the Board of Trustees. (See By-laws, Article X.) Serious complaints against the Abbot, the Head of Zendo, the Business Manager, Instructors, Priests and Novices, Trustees, Officers, and Affiliate Leaders may be handled through the formal complaint procedure set forth in X(B)(1), X(C), and X(D) of the By-laws.

In addition, any allegation that carries the potential of legal liability on the part of the Center, including those involving unlawful activity, sexual harassment, financial impropriety, or discrimination based on race, gender, ethnic or national origin, age, disability, or sexual orientation should be promptly brought to the attention of the Abbot, the Head of Zendo and the Board of Trustees. (See By-laws, Article X(F).)