

SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY

The North American Dharma Teachers Sangha Care-Taking Council (CTC) wants all Dharma Teachers to recognize and be sensitive to our positions of power — real or perceived — in relation to local Sangha members and retreat participants. Dharma Teachers have an ethical duty to prevent harm, including harm from intentional or unintentional sexual harassment. The Care-Taking Council offers this policy to increase Dharma Teacher awareness of and sensitivity to possible sexual harassment, minimize the risk of sexual harassment, and provide guidelines to help protect Sanghas and Dharma Teachers from the suffering caused by sexual harassment. The CTC offers this policy in full awareness that both sexual harassment and false accusations of sexual harassment are not uncommon in our greater society. Persons who experience sexual harassment or other sexual aggression that constitutes criminal conduct are encouraged to contact local law enforcement.

Sexual harassment includes a broad spectrum of unwelcome behaviors, including but not limited to veiled or explicit sexually-suggestive comments or jokes, flirting or sexual invitation, prolonged or intimate physical contact, and unwelcome dating requests. Sexual harassment may include single or multiple events that create an unwelcome sexual element in a relationship, community, or environment.

Lamp transmission places Dharma Teachers in a position of some authority in our communities, whether that authority is formally acknowledged or not. Like others in authority, Dharma Teachers must be aware that even apparently consensual dating relationships may be influenced by this authority, particularly when the relationship is with

someone whose power or authority differs. A power differential may make the consensual nature of a relationship murky at best. People may not feel comfortable saying “no” to retreat leaders or Sangha members in positions of authority who solicit a romantic or physical relationship. Thus, even in a consensual relationship, Dharma Teachers are encouraged to proceed with care to protect the Sangha and the other person, abiding as well in the tenets of the Mindfulness Trainings’ guidance on sexual responsibility.

Even when a Dharma Teacher receives a dating request, he or she should remember the possible impact of power differentials. When one person has authority — actual or apparent — over another, the consensual nature may not be as clear as it first seems. And regardless of who initiated the relationship, its consensual nature may be even murkier when the relationship ends.

Dharma Teachers must remember that sexual harassment of any kind may violate national and local law. If criminal conduct is involved, local Sangha members are encouraged to contact law enforcement if the person impacted by the conduct consents. Dharma Teachers are expected to do our best to keep our Sanghas, retreats, and other events free of sexual harassment.

Sangha members and retreatants with sexual harassment complaints that cannot be resolved locally are encouraged to contact the Harmony Committee of the CTC. (harmony@orderofinterbeing.org). Upon receiving complaints with a request for action, the Care-Taking Council and the Harmony Committee will do their best to follow up fairly, quickly, and responsibly.