

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION & COMPLAINTS POLICY**

LifeRing Secular Recovery (LSR) is a nonprofit, abstinence-based, worldwide network of individuals seeking to live in recovery from addiction to alcohol and/or to other non-medically indicated drugs. LSR's values of collaboration, diversity, empowerment, inclusion and innovation are actively applied. LifeRing's mission is to provide an abstinence-based, secular, and self-empowered addiction recovery pathway through our meeting and support network. As a secular, peer-to-peer support organization, LSR's role is to build a cooperative atmosphere of recovery for people of all faiths or none. The LSR Board of Directors is committed to dealing with conflict resolution and complaints that arise in an efficient, constructive, fair, and respectful manner.

### **CONFLICTS or COMPLAINTS**

From time to time the Executive Director, the LSR Board of Directors, one of the Regional Representatives, or a Convenor may receive a complaint regarding policies, programs, the organization, the behavior of a Member, the behavior of a Convenor, or the conduct of another Member or Convenor. The conflicts or complaints could also concern a Board Member, an Employee, or a Volunteer.

#### **1.0 INFORMAL INTERNAL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

##### **1.1 Attempt to Resolve the Issue on Your Own**

Individuals who find themselves in conflict with another person are encouraged to first attempt to talk directly to the person with whom they experience difficulty. They are encouraged to give feedback directly to the individual before initiating a formal conflict resolution process. This involves the sharing of perceptions and experiences, the clarification of needs, desires, and expectations, as well as the development of a mutually negotiated plan of action.

##### **1.2 Keep a Record**

The Complainant should keep a record of the incident(s) and any related discussions. The details should be noted, including when it happened, where it happened, who was involved, and any witnesses who may have seen or heard it. These notes will be requested if a formal complaint is made. The complaint will still be looked into and addressed even if the Complainant did not keep records.

##### **1.3 Seek Assistance**

If the Complainant feels uncomfortable dealing directly with the issue, if their efforts to do so are unsuccessful, or if the concern is of a harassing nature, they should bring those concerns to the Executive Director or to a Board Member. The Complainant can communicate the issues or concerns verbally by phone or in writing by email or by letter via postal service or by completing the [LSR Feedback Form](#) on the LSR website. Concerns or inquiries may be directed to LSR staff or to any Convenor, Regional Representative or Board Member. This process is available to provide individuals with information and/or the informal resolution of their concerns.

## **2.0 FORMAL INTERNAL COMPLAINT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

This section outlines LSR's process for resolving issues internally, on a formal basis. The Executive Director and/or the Board will follow the process or resolution outlined below.

### **2.1 Timing**

Complaints should be made as soon as possible, preferably no later than 30 days from the date of the incident(s). All efforts will be made to ensure that formal complaints are resolved within 30 business days, or within a specified time as discussed with the complainant. All complaints will be investigated in an unbiased, impartial, and timely manner. Convenors who receive a formal complaint must immediately forward the complaint to the Executive Director or Board Chair.

### **2.2 Meeting**

The Executive Director will thoroughly investigate the complaint, including any necessary consultation with Board Members, Regional Representatives, Convenors, Members, or Volunteers. The complaint will be considered in the context of existing policies, established procedures, and applicable legislation.

### **2.3 Conclusion**

At the conclusion of the formal investigation, a report will be generated (written, created, etc.), presented to and discussed with the Complainant, the Convenor (if involved), and/or the Executive Director, which will include the allegations and the investigation's findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

### **2.4 Complaint Against the Executive Director or Board Chair**

The matter will be referred to the Executive Committee or to a sub-committee of the Board established by the Executive Committee which sub-committee shall report to the Board.

### **2.5 Complaints by Members or Volunteers**

The Board of Directors will review the complaint – either at the next Board meeting or by calling a special meeting. The receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in two weeks. A response to the complainant will be provided within two weeks to 30 days, by email or a written letter, following the meeting at which the matter was discussed.

### **2.6 Complaint Against Another Member of the LSR Community**

The Member may respond to the complaint by notifying the Convenor, the Regional Representative, or the Board. The Member has two weeks to respond and can do so by email or a written letter. The Board will consider the Member's response before making a final decision.

## **2.7 Disciplinary Action - Board Members**

The Board may pass a resolution authorizing disciplinary action or the termination of membership for Violating any provision of the Bylaws, the Code of Conduct, or Missed meetings without reasonable cause. The notice: a written letter or email, to the Member shall set out:

- Reasons for the disciplinary action or termination of membership
- The Appeal process. The Appeal process will allow the Member/s to defend themselves, verbally or in writing within two weeks to 30 days.

## **2.8 Appeals**

A Member can appeal the decision of the Board in a Special Meeting of the Membership. This meeting will be called within two weeks to 30 days after the notice to the Member.

## **2.9 If the Appeal is not accepted, the Board's decision will be final.**

## **3.0 Confidentiality**

All persons involved with a complaint must endeavor to ensure that the matter remains confidential. To this end, complaints shall be investigated both confidentially and objectively, with respect for the rights of all parties involved. Personal information will be disclosed only on a need-to-know basis. Those conducting the investigation of a complaint should advise all persons interviewed that they will be expected to treat the matter as confidential and that they may be disciplined if they breach confidentiality.

## **4.0 Disciplinary Action - General**

Any Employee, Board Member, Regional Representative, Convenor, Member, or Volunteer who violates this policy, and/or Leadership Member who fails to take action when advised of a violation, will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including termination of association or employment with LSR. Disciplinary action will also be taken if a complaint is found to have been made fraudulently and with malicious intent.

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