



LIFESAVING SOCIETY®

*The Lifeguarding Experts*

## HARASSMENT POLICY

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### **Definition**

The B.C. and Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society recognizes that harassment is conduct or comment of an unwanted nature or that has a negative impact on the work or volunteer environment based on the prohibitive grounds outlined in the *B.C. Human Rights Code*. The *Code* prohibits discrimination on the following grounds:

- |                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. race                     | 9. criminal or summary conviction<br>unrelated to employment or volunteer<br>duties |
| 2. colour                   | 10. physical disability   |
| 3. ancestry                 | 11. mental disability   |
| 4. place of birth or origin | 12. sex   |
| 5. political belief         | 13. age   |
| 6. religion                 | 14. sexual orientation  |
| 7. marital status           |   |
| 8. family status            |   |

Harassment is conduct or comment based on the prohibitive grounds in the *Code* that is likely to cause offense or humiliation to any person, or that might reasonably be construed as placing a condition on employment or affiliation.

A victim of harassment or an harasser may be male or female; of the same or opposite gender; a member of staff, the executive, the council; a general volunteer; or a member of the public.

### **Commitment**

The Lifesaving Society believes that the environment of all employees and volunteers must be supportive of the dignity and self-esteem of all individuals. The Lifesaving Society is therefore committed to the maintenance of an environment that is free of harassment based on the above protected grounds. The Lifesaving Society will not condone harassment, and will treat any incident of harassment as a serious offense.

The Lifesaving Society recognizes that staff members and volunteers have the responsibility for ensuring that harassment is not allowed, condoned, or ignored. Volunteers and staff members must act immediately upon becoming aware that harassment has taken place, regardless of whether a formal complaint has been made.

Examples that constitute harassment include, but are not limited to, the following:

Verbal:

- racial or ethnic remarks or slurs including racially derogatory nicknames
- unwelcome remarks
- jokes about a person's body, conduct, sex, or sexual orientation, ethnic/racial origin, religion, accent or disability
- innuendoes or taunting
- gender-based insults
- sexually suggestive or obscene comments or gestures

- proposals of sexual intimacy or requests for sexual favours
- repeated, unwelcome requests for dates
- verbal abuse or threats

Physical:

- unwanted pinching, grabbing, hugging, patting, leering, brushing against, touching, kissing
- display of pornographic, racist, or other offensive or derogatory pictures, cartoons, or sayings

### **Application**

Behavior covered by this policy may occur at Lifesaving Society facilities; Lifesaving Society-related social or other functions; at work or volunteer-related conferences or training sessions; during work or volunteer-related travel; over the telephone or e-mail; or, elsewhere if the person harassed is there as a result of work or volunteer-related responsibilities, or if the behavior has an adverse effect on the volunteer or work environment of the Lifesaving Society.

### **Complaint Procedure**

Any staff member or volunteer who experiences harassment may pursue a complaint via one or more of the following avenues.

- Advise the harasser to stop or have someone else advise him or her verbally or in writing to stop.
- Report the incident/complaint to the Lifesaving Society Harassment Advisor at 604.299.5450. The Harassment Advisor is a trained individual who will explain the best avenues for pursuit of the complaint with the complainant. These options include, but are not limited to:
  - speaking to the individual either alone or with the Harassment Advisor about the incident to resolve the issue informally
  - initiating a full investigation in which the incident, the alleged harasser and any witnesses would be examined and/or recommending a mediator be appointed.
  - Report the incident/complaint to a staff member or Council member. This staff member or Council member will explain the avenues available in reporting/investigation, and will then assist in contacting the Lifesaving Society Harassment Advisor to follow-up with the complainant.

Should an individual not be satisfied through the above avenues, an external option available is to report the incident/complaint to the B.C. Commission of Human Rights at 815 Hornby, telephone 660-6811 in Vancouver, or toll-free 1-800-663-0876.\*

Any volunteer or staff member not comfortable coming forward to make the complaint personally may have someone else do so on his or her behalf. This person would serve as a liaison back to the complainant about the avenues available for pursuit of a complaint, and may make the individual feel more comfortable speaking to the Harassment Advisor.

Upon receipt of a harassment complaint, and with the complainant's permission, the Lifesaving Society will immediately undertake a thorough investigation in a confidential manner. Any individual accused of harassment shall be provided the opportunity to explain

his or her behavior, and it is recognized that the rights of a person accused of harassment must also be protected.

Where harassment has been found to have occurred, remedial action may be required after the thorough investigation of a harassment complaint. Remedies may include, but are not limited to: education; workplace changes; and, disciplinary action from warnings up to dismissal or removal of Lifesaving Society affiliation/membership. These reprisals would also apply to an individual who is found to have made a malicious complaint.

No person making a legitimate harassment complaint shall receive a reprisal or any form of retaliation by the B.C. and Yukon Branch of the Lifesaving Society, or its representatives.

An individual who is harassed has up to 12 months after the last incident to make a complaint via one of the above avenues. If an individual attempts to resolve the issue through an internal avenue and is unsuccessful, the B.C. Commission of Human Rights allows for complaints up to 12 months after the internal process has ended.

Note: Volunteers or staff in the Yukon Territory shall follow the same procedures as those in B.C. Those individuals wishing to contact the Human Rights Commission in the Yukon can obtain information through the Yukon Branch at (403) 667-6226 in Whitehorse or toll-free 1-800-661-0535 elsewhere in the Territory, but complaints would be handled by the B.C. office due to the location of the Lifesaving Society's Branch Office.

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**BC & Yukon Branch**

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