Complaints Procedure
World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA)
Last Review: July 2019

1. General
WSAVA is strongly against any form of harassment (see Code of Conduct). Our community culture is a key factor to our success, how we interact, communicate and behave with each other. All volunteers and staff are entitled to an environment which respects their personal dignity and which is free from any objectionable conduct. Harassment is an offence and incidents will be dealt with under the complaint's procedure. This policy applies to all volunteers, contractors and employees of WSAVA. This policy also applies to job applicants.

2. What Is Harassment?
Harassment is either:
2.1. Unwanted conduct whether verbal or not, which is of a sexual or racial nature, or other conduct based on someone's gender, age or disability
2.2. Bullying by intimidatory behaviour

3. The following are examples but is not an exhaustive list:
3.1. Inappropriate use of authority
3.2. Physical threats, assault or insulting behaviours or gestures
3.3. Display or circulation of sexually or racially offensive written or verbal material
3.4. Insults, ridicule or teasing
3.5. Verbal conduct of a sexual nature, unwelcome sexual advances or propositions
3.6. Unwanted physical contact
3.7. Making unwelcome jokes or comments about someone's race, national or ethnic origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, disability
3.8. Cyber harassment
3.9. Demeaning or belittling comments

4. Complaints Procedure – informal stage
4.1. A recipient of unwanted conduct amounting to harassment, may try to resolve the problem themselves if they prefer, by explaining to the individual concerned that the behaviour is not welcome, that it offends or makes the recipient uncomfortable. Complaints should be made as soon as possible.
4.2. If the behavior does not cease or the volunteer find approaching the harasser difficult, further informal assistance is available.
Volunteers who wish to discuss such a complaint in confidence should contact one of the following:
4.2.1. Member of the WSAVA Executive Board
4.2.2. CEO
4.3. After discussion with the complainant, the Executive Board Member or CEO will tell the alleged harasser that a complaint has been made against them, in letter by email. Acknowledgment of receipt will be requested.

The letter will also provide details of the allegations that have been made against him or her. If mediation fails, the alleged harasser’s member association will receive a copy of the complaint.

4.4. Mediation
Wherever appropriate and possible, the parties to the harassment complaint will be offered mediation prior to proceeding with a harassment investigation. Mediation is voluntary and confidential. It is intended to assist the parties to arrive at a mutually acceptable resolution. The mediator will be a neutral person, agreed upon by both parties. The mediator will not be involved in investigating the complaint.

5. Complaints Procedure – formal stage (appendix 1)
5.1. Where the informal method fails, volunteers are advised to bring a formal complaint against the harasser and should seek assistance in doing so. The complaint should be made in writing and where possible state the following:
   5.1.1. The name of the harasser
   5.1.2. The nature of the harassment
   5.1.3. The date and time when the harassment occurred
   5.1.4. The names of any witnesses to the harassment

5.2. All complaints will be investigated thoroughly by an independent panel as quickly as possible (appendix 2). The independent panel will comprise of two WSAVA representatives and two representatives of the alleged harassers Member Association. Both the complainant and the alleged harasser will be permitted to be accompanied by a fellow volunteer.

5.3. Witnesses may have to be asked for witness statements. Confidentiality will be maintained where possible at all times. The importance of confidentiality will be stressed to all those interviewed and everyone will be required not to discuss the complaint with other volunteers.

5.4. Investigations will be carried out with sensitivity and with respect for the rights of both the complainant and the alleged harasser.

5.5. Investigations will focus on the facts of the complaints. Notes will be kept and those interviewed will receive notes of the interview to approve.

6. Substantiated Complaint
If a harassment complaint is upheld, the independent panel will decide what action is appropriate.

6.1. Remedies for the volunteer who was harassed may include: an oral or written apology.
6.2. Corrective action for the volunteer found to have engaged in harassment may include: a reprimand; a suspension; or loss of their position within WSAVA
Appendix 1
Harassment complaint form

Name and contact information of volunteer who has allegedly experienced harassment:

Name of alleged harasser(s) and contact information, if available:

Details of the Complaint
Please describe in as much detail as possible the bullying and harassment incident(s), including:
(a) the names of the parties involved; (b) any witnesses to the incident(s); (c) the location, date and time of the incident(s); (d) details about the incident(s) (behavior and/or words used); (e) any additional details

Relevant Documents/Evidence
Attach any supporting documents, such as emails, handwritten notes, or photographs.

Signature: Date:
Appendix 2 – Investigation Template

This template may be used for guidance in investigating harassment complaints. The persons conducting the investigation must not have been involved in the incident or complaint of harassment and must not be under the direct control of the alleged harasser.

Name of investigator: ____________________________________________

Date of investigation: __________________________________________

1. **Background Information:** Who are the people involved? Who reported and when?

2. Name of person who reported harassment:

3. If not the same person as above, name of person who allegedly experienced harassment:

4. Date complaint/concern raised and how:

5. Name of respondent(s) (alleged harasser)

**A. Investigation Plan:** Plan and conduct the investigation

1. An investigator will interview the volunteer who allegedly experienced harassment

2. The same investigator will interview the alleged harasser.

3. Interview relevant witnesses. Ask specific questions about what they have observed, are aware of or have personally experienced.

4. Collect and review relevant documents from the volunteer, alleged harasser and witnesses

5. Take detailed notes.

6. Keep the investigation confidential. Instruct the volunteer who allegedly experienced workplace harassment, the alleged harasser and witnesses not to talk to others about the investigation unless it is necessary, for instance, to obtain advice or counselling.

**B. Volunteer(s) Concerns/ Harassment Allegations:** When did the incident(s) occur? Confirm date of first incident and any subsequent behaviors or conduct.

Date of first incident: ____________________________________________

Date of last incident: ____________________________________________
Date of other incident(s): ________________________________

C. Alleged Harasser(s) Response:

D. Interview Relevant Witnesses: List witnesses. Interview relevant witnesses and make notes.

E. Collected documentation: List the documents collected for the investigation and how or from whom they were obtained.

F. Investigation Result(s): The investigator’s summary report should set out who was interviewed, what evidence was obtained and an analysis of the evidence to determine whether harassment occurred.
   Summary of key evidence:

G. Recommended Next Steps:

H. Report provided to:

I. Appeals process
   Either the complainant or alleged harasser may, within thirty (10) days of being notified of the investigation result, submit an appeal, in writing, to the CEO.

   Appeals will be considered on the following grounds:
   1. procedural irregularities prejudiced the outcome of the complaint;
2. there was bias amongst the original decision maker(s);
3. new information/evidence has come to light that should be investigated;
4. the proposed action is inappropriate.

In the event that it is determined that further investigation is required, an independent investigator will be appointed (by both WSAVA and the Member Association of alleged harasser) to review any additional findings. These shall be disclosed to the parties, who will be provided with an opportunity to respond.

The decision of the independent investigator will be final.