

ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY

ANTI-HARASSMENT AND BULLYING POLICY VILLAGE CHAPEL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

This policy was adopted by vote of the VCPC Session on March 18, 2026.

INTRODUCTION

It is the policy of Village Chapel Presbyterian Church (USA), hereinafter referred to as VCPC, that people will be treated with respect, free from hostility, harassment, bullying, and in a manner which recognizes everyone's right to dignity.

VCPC commits to create an environment free from hostility in which all individuals are valued for their contribution and can develop to their full potential.

VCPC expects everyone to relate to each other properly and appropriately and treat members, staff, people using the facilities, and the people we serve with respect and in a manner which recognizes everyone's right to dignity. Any behavior that undermines this is unacceptable.

VCPC does not tolerate any form of harassment or bullying under any circumstances. Implementing and enforcing the policy are the duties of the session and Pastors. All members and staff have a responsibility to ensure that harassment and bullying do not occur in VCPC.

It is intended that the application of this policy is not to conflict with national, state, or local legislation and will comply with current regulations in the Book of Order.

This policy applies to all VCPC-related functions and communications.

DISTRIBUTION

This policy shall apply to all of the following: VCPC staff, session, members, and groups using the facilities of VCPC. This policy shall also be available on VCPC's website and posted in the church library.

BOUNDARY TRAINING AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

VCPC will provide boundary training related to this policy for all elders and staff at least every 36 months.

All elders and staff of VCPC are required to acknowledge that they have received, read, understand, and agree to conduct themselves in accordance with this policy.

HARASSMENT DEFINITION

Harassment is unwanted conduct related to age, gender, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy, maternity, family responsibilities, political beliefs, race, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, which has the purpose or effect of violating an individual's dignity, or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. Unwanted sexual advances are also harassment.

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Harassment is when an employee is treated less favorably because they have rejected or refused to submit to unwanted advances.

Harassment is normally characterized by more than one incident of unacceptable behavior, particularly if it reoccurs once it has been made clear to the person that the behavior is considered offensive. However, a single incident may constitute harassment if it is sufficiently serious. Harassment on any grounds will not be tolerated.

EXAMPLES OF HARASSMENT

Examples of harassment include:

- Verbal — crude language, open hostility, offensive jokes, suggestive remarks, innuendoes, rude or vulgar comments, malicious gossip, and offensive songs;
- Non-verbal — wolf-whistles, obscene gestures, sexually suggestive posters/calendars, pornographic material (both paper-based and generated on a computer, including offensive screen-savers), graffiti, offensive letters, offensive e-mails, text messages on mobile phones and messages on social media;
- Physical — unnecessary touching, patting, pinching or brushing against another person's body, intimidating behavior, assault and physical coercion;
- Coercion — such as pressure or promises in return for sexual favors (e.g. to get a job or be promoted) or pressure to participate in political groups;
- Isolation or non-cooperation and exclusion from social activities;
- Intrusion — such as following, pestering, or spying.

BULLYING DEFINITION

Bullying is a deliberate and consistent wearing down process comprising sustained psychological abuse that makes victims feel demeaned and/or threatened. Bullying is defined as offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior, or an abuse or misuse of power, which has the purpose, or effect, of intimidating, belittling and humiliating the recipient.

EXAMPLES OF BULLYING

Bullying can range from extreme forms such as violence and intimidation to less obvious forms such as psychological manipulation or isolating individuals, including the use of social media.

Examples include:

- Shouting or swearing at people in public and private;
- Persistent unjustified criticism, or criticism without offering constructive solution in case of criticism that may be justified;
- Ignoring or deliberately excluding people from professional activities for personal reasons;
- Persecution through threats and instilling fear;
- Spreading malicious rumors;

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- Sending, posting, or sharing negative, harmful, false, or mean content about someone else on social media (SMS, text, and apps, or online in social media, forums, or gaming where people can view, participate in, or share content); and
- Sharing personal or private information about someone else causing embarrassment or humiliation.

INVESTIGATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Allegations of harassment and/or bullying shall be made to the pastor, clerk of the Session and/or head of the personnel ministry team. Allegations will be investigated in accordance with procedures in the VCPC Disciplinary Policy and the Church Discipline chapter in the Book of Order.

Examples of harassment and bullying are often highly context-specific and sensitive in nature. Individuals who believe they are being harassed or bullied may wish to, and are welcome to, discuss their situation with the pastor, clerk of the Session and/or head of the personnel ministry team before deciding what action to take.

VCPC operates an open-door policy to discuss problems. Members and staff can discuss the matter with a pastor or ruling elder on an informal basis.

MONITORING

Where harassment or bullying has been reported and investigated, regular checks will be made by the session to ensure that the harassment or bullying has stopped.

MALICIOUS COMPLAINTS

Where a complaint is blatantly untrue and has been brought out of malice, or for some other unacceptable motive, the complainant will be subject to VCPC's disciplinary procedures, as will any witnesses who have deliberately misled VCPC during its investigations.