



## **Policy and Procedures to Foster Safe Community and Prohibit Harassment, Discrimination, and Retaliation**

### **Our Mission**

The mission of the MWPA is to enrich the literary life and culture of Maine by fostering a community for writers and readers of all ages and all walks of life. We do this by inviting literary types to connect throughout the year at our workshops and seminars, our writing retreats, professional marketing events, festivals, and celebrations. The more who join us, the stronger we become. So that everyone feels welcome, the MWPA is committed to nurturing an inclusive, supportive, and most importantly, a safe community.

### **Statement of Purpose**

The MWPA is committed to a business and creative environment in which all individuals are treated with respect and dignity. Each individual has the right to work, write, and learn in a professional atmosphere that promotes equal opportunities and prohibits unlawful discriminatory practices, including harassment. Therefore, the MWPA expects that all relationships among persons in the organization (from boardroom to classroom) will be free of bias, prejudice, and harassment.

The MWPA has developed this policy to ensure that all of its employees and participants at all levels of the organization can work and create in an environment free from unlawful harassment, discrimination, and retaliation. The MWPA will make every reasonable effort to ensure that all concerned are familiar with these policies and are aware that any complaint in violation of such policies will be investigated and resolved appropriately.

Anyone connected professionally to the MWPA who has questions or concerns about these policies and procedures should talk with the MWPA Executive Director or another staff member.

The law and the policies of the MWPA prohibit disparate treatment on the basis of sex or any other protected characteristic, and it seeks, encourages, and supports compliance with the following requirements.

### **Equal Employment Opportunity**

It is the policy of the MWPA to ensure equal employment opportunity without discrimination or harassment on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, national origin, genetic information, or any



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other characteristic protected by law. The MWPA prohibits any such discrimination or harassment.

### **Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment constitutes discrimination and is illegal under federal, state, and local laws. For the purposes of this policy, “sexual harassment” is defined, as in the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Guidelines, as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature when, for example: a) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual’s employment, b) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or c) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual’s work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 recognizes two types of sexual harassment: a) quid pro quo and b) hostile work environment. Sexual harassment may include a range of subtle and not-so-subtle behaviors and may involve individuals of the same or different gender. Depending on the circumstances, these behaviors may include unwanted sexual advances or requests for sexual favors; sexual jokes and innuendo; verbal abuse of a sexual nature; commentary about an individual’s body, sexual prowess or sexual deficiencies; leering, whistling or touching; insulting or obscene comments or gestures; display in the workplace of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; and other physical, verbal or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

The MWPA makes note specifically of sexual harassment in this policy because it is of particular concern and emphasis, however, it is not the only type of harassment or discrimination that the MWPA, and the law, prohibits.

### **Other Harassment**

Harassment on the basis of any protected characteristic is strictly prohibited. Under this policy, harassment is verbal, written or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression regarding national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law, or that their relatives, friends or associates, and that: a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive



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work environment, b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance, or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's employment opportunities.

Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts; denigrating jokes; and written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group that is placed on walls or elsewhere on the employer's premises or circulated in the workplace, on company time or using company equipment by e-mail, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites or other means.

### **Individuals and Conduct Covered**

These policies apply to MWPA Board members, staff, workshop instructors, vendors, consultants, and workshop / class participants.

Conduct prohibited by these policies is unacceptable in the workplace, classroom, and in any work-related setting outside the workplace, such as during business trips, business meetings, MWPA-hosted events, and any other business-related social events.

### **Reporting an Incident of Harassment, Discrimination, or Retaliation**

The MWPA encourages reporting of all incidents of discrimination, harassment, or retaliation. **Individuals who believe that they have been subjected to such conduct should raise their concern with the MWPA's executive director, or, if it involves the executive director, the MWPA board president.**

As an initial matter (but not the only recourse), the MWPA encourages individuals who believe they are being subjected to such conduct to promptly advise the offender that their behavior is unwelcome and to request that it be discontinued. Often this action alone will resolve the problem. The MWPA recognizes, however, that an individual may prefer to pursue the matter through complaint procedures, and is welcomed as well as encouraged to do so as described above.

### **Complaint Reporting Procedure**

Individuals who believe they have been subjected to conduct prohibited by this policy or believe they have witnessed such conduct should discuss their concerns with the person with whom they have a complaint, to the extent that is comfortable and / or feasible for the complainant. **If that course of action is not comfortable or viable, the individual with the complaint should raise**



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**it with the MWPA’s executive director, or, if it involves the executive director, the MWPA’s board president.**

The MWPA requires and encourages prompt reporting of complaints or concerns so that rapid and constructive action can be taken before relationships become irreparably strained.

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation will be investigated and reported promptly to the MWPA’s board president and MWPA’s executive committee. The investigation may include individual interviews with the parties involved and, where necessary, with individuals who may have observed the alleged conduct or may have other relevant knowledge. MWPA will retain appropriate and confidential records of investigation and resolution of complaints under this policy. The MWPA Executive Committee will report to the MWPA Board of Directors in regards to the results of the investigation and any necessary action or response.

The MWPA will maintain confidentiality throughout the investigatory process to the extent consistent with adequate investigation and appropriate corrective action. Note that absolute confidentiality cannot be assured, however, the MWPA will treat each complaint with respect, and communicate information on a strictly need-to-know basis.

**No Retaliation**

Retaliation against an individual for reporting harassment or discrimination or for participating in an investigation of a claim of harassment or discrimination is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated and addressed.