

**National STEM Honor Society
Sexual Abuse Policy & Procedure**

Adopted by Board May 13, 2021

National STEM Honor Society (NSTEM) has a zero tolerance policy towards sexual abuse or molestation in its workplace or at any activity sponsored by or related to it. To make this policy clear to all employees, contractors, volunteers, and board members, we have adopted mandatory procedures that employees, volunteers, contractors, board members, individuals, and victims must follow when they learn of or witness sexual abuse or molestation. Those reasonably suspected or believed to have committed sexual abuse or misconduct will be appropriately disciplined, up to and including termination of employment or membership, as well as criminally prosecuted. No employee, volunteer, board member, or other person, regardless of their title or position, has the authority to commit or allow sexual abuse or misconduct. Sexual abuse includes sexual assault, exploitation, molestation, or injury. It does not include sexual harassment, which is another form of behavior that is prohibited by NSTEM.

Reporting Procedure: Immediately report all suspicions or allegations of abuse, regardless of state law requirements. Reporting should indicate a supervisor or specific person, suspected sexual abuse or misconduct to NSTEM CEO Eric Magers, 978.381.9305, as well as DCF, Child Protective Services, or other appropriate agencies. It is not required to directly confront the person who is the source of the report, question, or complaint before notifying any of the individuals listed. NSTEM will take every reasonable measure to ensure that those named in a complaint of misconduct or are too closely associated with those involved in the complaint will not be part of the investigative team.

Investigation & Follow Up: NSTEM will take all allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct seriously and will promptly, thoroughly, and equitably investigate whether misconduct has taken place. NSTEM may utilize an outside third party to conduct an investigation of misconduct. Our organization will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or other regulatory/protective services agencies. To the fullest extent possible, but consistent with our legal obligation to report suspected abuse to appropriate authorities, we will endeavor to keep the identities of the alleged victims and investigation subject confidential. If the investigation substantiates the allegation, our policy provides for disciplinary penalties, including but not limited to termination of the actor's relationship with our organization.

Retaliation Prohibited: We prohibit any retaliation against anyone, including an employee, volunteer, board member, student, or individual, who in good faith reports sexual abuse, alleges that it is being committed, or participates in the investigation. Intentionally false or malicious accusations of sexual abuse are prohibited. Anyone who improperly retaliates against someone who has made a good faith allegation of sexual abuse or

intentionally provides false information to that effect will be subject to discipline, up to and including termination.

Reporting to Law Enforcement or Appropriate Child or Adult Protective Services: NSTEM is committed to following the state and federal legal requirements for reporting allegations or incidents of sexual abuse or misconduct to appropriate law enforcement and child or adult protective services organizations. It is the policy of NSTEM not to attempt to investigate or assess the validity or credibility of an allegation of sexual or physical abuse as a condition before reporting the allegation to proper law enforcement authorities or protective services organizations.

Grooming Definition: Grooming is the process used by an abuser to select an individual, win the individual's trust, manipulate the individual into sexual activity, and keep the individual from disclosing the abuse. Because sexual abusers 'groom' individuals for abuse, it is possible a staff member or volunteer may witness behavior intended to 'groom' an individual for sexual abuse. Staff members and volunteers are asked to report 'grooming' behavior, any policy violations, or any suspicious behaviors to a supervisor or a specific member of the organization.

What is not Allowed/Guidelines for Interactions:

1. **One-on-One Interactions:** To ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals, face-to-face one-on-one interactions between employees, volunteers, contractors, board members, and individuals should be avoided whenever possible. When such interactions are necessary, they must be conducted in open and visible areas.
2. **Inappropriate Behavior:** Any behavior that is sexually suggestive, exploitative, harassing, or creates an uncomfortable or hostile environment is strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to, making sexually explicit comments, gestures, or jokes, displaying or sharing sexually explicit material, or engaging in any form of sexual harassment.
3. **Physical Contact:** Physical contact of a sexual nature or any non-consensual physical contact is strictly prohibited. Employees, volunteers, contractors, board members, and individuals should obtain explicit consent before engaging in any physical contact and should respect personal boundaries.
4. **Verbal Interactions/Conversations:** Employees, volunteers, contractors, board members, and individuals should engage in respectful and professional verbal interactions. Avoid using sexually explicit or offensive language, making inappropriate comments or innuendos, or engaging in conversations that may be considered offensive, intimidating, or harassing.

Protocol for Response to Victims: In addition to promptly notifying the appropriate authorities, NSTEM is committed to providing support and assistance to victims of sexual abuse or misconduct. This includes:

1. **Providing Information:** NSTEM will provide victims with information about available resources, support services, and counseling options as requested. This information will assist victims in obtaining the necessary assistance and support they may need.
2. **Respect and Confidentiality:** NSTEM will treat all victims with respect, sensitivity, and maintain their confidentiality to the fullest extent possible while complying with legal obligations.

Enforcement of Policies/Consequences of Prohibited or Harmful Acts:

1. **Violations:** Any violation of the sexual abuse policy, including engaging in inappropriate behavior, misconduct, or retaliation, will be taken seriously and may result in disciplinary action.
2. **Disciplinary Action:** Disciplinary action for violations of the policy may include, but is not limited to suspension, termination of employment, or membership, as well as any other appropriate action based on the severity of the violation.
3. **Reassignment:** NSTEM reserves the right to reassign employees or volunteers involved in a violation of the sexual abuse policy to different roles or areas of responsibility, as deemed necessary to ensure the safety and well-being of all individuals.

Screening Process: NSTEM maintains a rigorous screening process for all employees, volunteers, contractors, and board members, including background checks, reference checks, and verification of qualifications and credentials. This process is designed to prevent individuals with a history of sexual abuse or misconduct from joining the organization.

Statement of Acknowledgment and Agreement: I have read and understood the NSTEM Sexual Abuse Policy. I agree to comply with all the requirements outlined in the policy. I understand that any violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment or membership.