



VSTA Sponsored Meetings Policy

December 6, 2018 – Executive Committee

The VSTA is committed to providing a safe, secure, and respectful environment that is free from bullying and harassment at all VSTA-sponsored meetings.

The policy applies to all members attending VSTA-sponsored events.

1. Definition of bullying and personal harassment
 - a. Bullying and personal harassment is defined as behaviours that would be understood by a reasonable person to be contrary to the development and maintenance of a respectful relationship. These behaviours include, but are not limited to, incidents that are:
 - i. vexatious; conduct, comments, actions, or gestures which are humiliating, offensive, hurtful, or belittling.
 - ii. repeated; conduct, comments, actions, or gestures that when taken in isolation seem minor, but when repeated can lead to a conclusion of harassment.
 - iii. a single incident of sufficient seriousness to have a significant impact on the recipient or the environment.
 - iv. hostile or unwanted.
 - v. affecting the member's dignity, well-being, or physical integrity.
 - vi. resulting in a harmful or poisoned environment.
 - b. Examples of bullying and personal harassment include, but are not limited to:
 - i. written or verbal comments, actions, gestures, or other behaviours or "jokes" which are humiliating, offensive, hurtful, or belittling.
 - ii. intimidation.
 - iii. abusing authority.
 - iv. yelling or shouting at an individual or group (except where intended to alert another to danger).
 - v. attempting to discredit an individual or group by spreading false information about her or him or them.
2. Any of the above actions reproduced or represented on Social Media or any other location on the Internet.
3. Actions that are not included in this policy
 - a. Nothing in this policy is meant to fetter lively discussion of different points of view and vigorous debate, as reflected in the BCTF Commitment to Solidarity statement, or the exercising of authority as provided for in the Simplified Rules of Order used at VSTA meetings.
 - b. The policy is also not meant to discourage well-meaning, active engagement in the union and should be seen as a way to prevent complaints and/or support the resolution of complaints, rather than a means to limit engagement, influence political decisions, or restrain participation.
4. Member responsibilities

Every member has the right to be treated in a fair, reasonable, and respectful manner. Members covered by this policy are responsible for creating a respectful environment by:

- a. ensuring behaviours are respectful and appropriate at all times.
 - b. accepting responsibility for one's actions, reactions, and behaviours, and their impact on others.
 - c. making one's concerns known promptly and appropriately.
 - d. being a part of the solution by raising concerns directly with the member in private, by approaching the conversation with an open mind, by clarifying one's concerns in a respectful manner with resolution being the focus and goal.
5. No reprisals
No adverse action, including retaliation, shall be directed to either a member making a complaint or receiving a complaint. All complaints are made in good faith and on the basis of reasonable beliefs.
6. False or frivolous complaints
Members shall not make false or frivolous complaints.

Procedure

When a member feels that they are the target of bullying or harassing behaviours, they may:

- a. Raise concerns directly with the member in private, by approaching the conversation with an open mind, by clarifying one's concerns in a respectful manner with resolution being the focus and goal. A member may also write them a letter (date it and keep a copy). Notes should be kept regarding all incidents of unwelcome or harassing behaviours including details such as when, where, how often, who else was present and resulting impact. If these efforts to get the person to stop are unsuccessful, or if the member does not feel comfortable approaching them directly, then a complaint can be filed as below.
- b. Contact one or more of the VSTA In House Table Officers.
- c. The VSTA In House Table Officers may speak with the member accused of bullying or harassing behaviours and attempt to resolve the issue. All complaints will be taken seriously and the President and/or designate will act on all complaints and endeavour to resolve them quickly, confidentially, and fairly.
- d. They may:
 - i. Propose mediation
 - ii. Write a letter of expectation outlining the concerns and the expected behaviour at VSTA sponsored meetings
 - iii. With the support of Executive, request that the member not attend VSTA sponsored meetings until such time as the member is able to comport themselves in a respectful manner
 - iv. With the support of the Executive, where a school union representative has been asked not to attend meetings until a complaint or concern has been resolved and/or they commit to adhering to this policy, the School Union Team at the school concerned be asked to select an alternate to attend the meetings in the interim

Confidentiality

Every reasonable effort will be made to ensure confidentiality throughout the process except where disclosure is necessary for the purposes of investigation or as required by law.

This process is not intended to circumvent or supercede any other process or remedy that may be available (i.e. collective agreements, Human Rights Codes, Constitutions, criminal charges, civil litigation, etc.).