

Code of Conduct Complaint Policy & Procedures

A. Policy

Opening Statement

Parsec, Inc. ("Parsec") is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the promotion and enjoyment of science fiction, fantasy, and related genres through events, publications, and community engagement. In this document, Parsec is referred to as "**the Organization**" for simplicity and consistency.

1) Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide a fair, timely, and consistent process for receiving, reviewing, and resolving complaints related to violations of the Organization's Code of Conduct (the "Code") (<https://parsec-sff.org/code-of-conduct/>).

2) Scope

This policy applies to all members, volunteers, officers, directors, staff, speakers, vendors, and guests ("participants") at Organization events and in Organization-managed spaces (in person and online). Registration and participation require acknowledgement of and adherence to the Code.

3) Definitions

- **Harassment / Prohibited Conduct:** As defined in the Organization's published Code of Conduct (See *Section 1, Purpose* for the current Code of Conduct link). All references in this Policy and Procedure flow from those definitions.
- **Complaint:** A report alleging conduct in violation of the Code.
- **Complainant:** The person(s) who files a complaint alleging a violation of the Code.
- **Alleged Offender:** The person(s) named in a complaint as having allegedly violated the Code. This person is presumed to be acting in good faith until a determination is made through the procedures outlined in this policy.
- **Committee:** The Code of Conduct Committee appointed by the Board.
- **Board:** The Organization's Board of Directors.
- **Intake Officer:** The designated officer (e.g., Secretary or Committee Chair) who receives complaints and performs initial complaint preparation and sensitive information redaction.
- **Accountability Action:** Corrective steps that address misconduct and aim to prevent future occurrences.

4) Principles

- **Fair Process:** Both complainant and alleged offender will be heard, with the accused permitted an opportunity to respond to the complaint. When requested, either the complainant or the alleged offender has the ability to meet with the full Committee.
- **Timeliness:** Prompt acknowledgement, preliminary review, and regular updates will be provided to all parties until closure of the reported incident.
- **Confidentiality & Data Minimization:** Information is shared only with those directly involved. Identifying details may be redacted when distributing materials for review.
- **Conflict of Interest / Recusal:** Any Committee or Board member named in a complaint, or with a real or perceived conflict of interest in the matter, must recuse themselves and may not access case materials or cast a vote on the matter.

For the purpose of this process, 'recuse' means the member must excuse themselves fully from all case discussions, deliberations, and votes, including leaving the meeting room (physical or virtual) while the matter is addressed. This ensures they do not have access to case materials or the opportunity to influence the process in ways unavailable to the complainant.

- **Anti-Retaliation:** Retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports or participates in a complaint is prohibited and itself a violation subject to action.
- **Law Enforcement:** The Organization is not a court or law enforcement agency. Nothing in these procedures prevents parties from seeking civil or criminal remedies separately.
- **Appended Note:** Persons of interest whether on the side of the accused or on the side of the accuser cannot serve on the investigative committee.

5) Roles & Composition

- **Board** appoints the Committee annually and fills vacancies. No person under an active complaint may be appointed or continue to serve until the matter is resolved. Recused Board members may not vote on related matters.
- **Committee** maintains quorum procedures, keeps minutes for closed sessions, and recommends Accountability Actions to the Board when required.
- **Intake Officer** receives all complaints, acknowledges receipt, conducts redaction, initiates recusal checks, and coordinates communications.

6) Dues & Fees

Membership dues and event fees are **non-refundable**, including when Accountability Actions limit participation. The Board may approve a prorated refund in exceptional circumstances.

7) Standard of Proof

Decisions are based on a **preponderance of the evidence**. This is the standard of proof in civil cases, requiring that the evidence presented by a party must be more convincing and create a greater probability of truth than the evidence presented by the opposing party.

8) Appeals

Parties may appeal a dismissal or final determination to the Board within the timeframe set in the Procedure. Appeals are limited to: (a) material procedural error; (b) new, material evidence not previously available; or (c) disproportionate Accountability Action. The Board's decision is final.

9) Records & Transparency

- **Records:** Complaint records are retained securely for 3 years in password-protected digital storage maintained by the Secretary (default) or another Board Officer as assigned by the Board. Access is limited to the Board President, Secretary, and Committee Chair for legitimate organizational purposes only, with access logs maintained. Physical documents, if any, are stored in a locked filing system with controlled access. Records are destroyed via secure shredding or deletion after the retention period
- **Transparency:** The Organization may publish an annual, anonymized summary of complaint activity (counts, types of actions) without identifying any party.
- **Information Protection:** Personal information and complaint details are confidential and will not be shared externally except when legally required or with the explicit consent of the individuals concerned.

B. Procedure

1) How to File a Complaint

- **Preferred:** Submit the online Incident Report at [<https://parsec-sff.org/incident-report/>].
- **Alternatives:** If the complaint concerns the Committee Chair or a Board officer, or if the form cannot otherwise be used, submit either a written complaint or disclose in person to a Board Member of the complainant's choice. Current contacts are posted on the Organization's website at <https://parsec-sff.org/mission-programs>
- **Required Content:** Complainant's name and contact information; names of involved parties (if known); date, location, and description of the incident(s); any witnesses; any supporting materials (screenshots, messages, photos, etc.).

2) Acknowledgement (within 3 business days)

The Intake Officer acknowledges receipt and provides a case reference number and a brief outline of next steps.

3) Intake & Redaction (within 7 days)

- The Intake Officer reviews the complaint and **redacts** personal contact details and non-material identifiers before distribution to reviewers.
- **Recusal Check:** Any Committee/Board member named or in conflict is documented as **recused** and is excluded from all materials, meetings, and votes.

4) Preliminary Review (within 30 days of receipt)

The Committee conducts an initial assessment to determine credibility and whether a full investigation is warranted. Outcomes:

- **Dismiss** (unsubstantiated or outside scope): Written notice to parties with reasons and **appeal procedures**.
- **Proceed to Investigation**: Written notice to parties with a summary of issues under review and next steps.

5) Investigation

- Interviews are conducted with the complainant, the alleged offender, and relevant witnesses. Multi-respondent cases are handled **separately** to protect confidentiality.
- The alleged offender is provided an opportunity to respond in writing and may request to **meet with the full Committee** to answer questions. A silent support person may attend, at the Committee's discretion.
- The Committee may request documents, communications, or other evidence from parties.

6) Determination & Accountability Action

- After fact-finding, the Committee determines whether the Code was violated (by preponderance of evidence) and, if so, recommends an Accountability Action proportionate to the conduct. Examples include but are not limited to: verbal or written warning, conditions on participation, removal from an event, suspension of membership or privileges, removal from office/committee, or a ban for a defined period.
- Where required by bylaws, the **Board** reviews and adopts, modifies, or returns the recommendation. Named members in the complaint must recuse themselves.

7) Notice of Outcome

The Intake Officer (or designee) provides written notice to the complainant and the alleged offender, including findings, actions, effective dates, and appeal instructions. Where privacy interests require, summaries may be limited, but sufficient detail will be provided to explain the decision and next steps.

8) Appeals (file within 14 calendar days of outcome notice)

- Appeals must state the specific grounds (procedural error, new evidence, or disproportionate action) and include any supporting materials.
- An **Appeals Panel** of non-conflicted Board members reviews the record; may request clarifications; and issues a written decision within **30 days** of a complete appeal. The decision is final.

9) Implementation & Monitoring

The Committee and relevant officers implement actions, set any compliance conditions, and monitor adherence.

10) Timelines & Ongoing Review

- The Committee (or Board, as applicable) will **convene within 30 days** of the original complaint and will meet at least **monthly** thereafter until the matter is resolved.
- Parties will receive **status updates at least monthly** until the case is closed.

11) Closure & Recordkeeping

Upon completion of actions, the case is closed and archived. The Intake Officer records dates, determinations, actions, and any recusal entries in the confidential log.

12) External Processes

Nothing in this Procedure prevents any person from pursuing civil or criminal processes; if such processes are initiated, the Organization may pause, continue, or modify its internal process to protect safety and fairness.

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