

Summary of and Context for the Sexual Misconduct Guideline

Guideline M.5., Handling Oppressor Patterns, Including Sexual Misconduct, and Addressing Mistakes, Disagreements, and Criticism, was adopted by the RC World Conference in August 2022. It strengthens our commitment to handling oppressor patterns along with mistakes, disagreements, and criticism in the RC Community. As part of this, it includes a detailed process for addressing any incident of sexual misconduct or sexual harassment.

We have always had a means of redressing sexual misconduct in the RC Community. However, we have not had a specific written process before now. We are adopting this process to strengthen and further clarify our commitment to creating and maintaining an environment in the RC Community that is free of sexual misconduct. Without a specific policy on sexual misconduct, the RC Community would be legally more vulnerable in the United States and some other countries.

The RC Community *Guidelines* function as our policies, so this policy is included in the *Guidelines*.

This Guideline, M.5., does the following to address sexual misconduct

- It seeks to prevent any sexual misconduct in the RC Community and to stop it quickly if it does occur.
- It provides those who believe they have experienced sexual misconduct with a means of addressing it and the support to do so.
- It helps those who have acted in harmful ways to take responsibility for the harm they have caused and to address the underlying causes of their behavior.
- It provides resource to all involved without vilifying anyone.

We intend for it to accomplish this without dampening the atmosphere in RC of open expression of caring and respectful physical touch and without interfering with our work on closeness, connection, sex, and sexuality.

We worked and discharged for several decades in the RC Community to uncover how isolated we had been early in our lives, and how alone we still are. As we discharged, we could show each other more and more of how we had been hurt and care more and more about each other. This allowed us to reach for each other more openly, and reach for people not yet in RC, which created better conditions for our work. It is important that our caring about each other as humans remain open and central in RC.

If people act out their distresses, we want to reach for them with caring as we stop their distressed behavior. Our society oppresses people until they misbehave and then punishes them for acting out the distresses it has installed. Society is not so much interested in ending distresses as in using them to divide us. After we're divided, oppressive forces use the distresses as a

pretext to attack individuals or groups that are seen as a threat to the society or to create a distraction.

We believe this Guideline will (1) address the needs of the RC Community as an organization in the wider society, and (2) do so without compromising our understandings in RC about the goodness of human beings, why we struggle, and how we can reclaim our humanity in an oppressive system. It was difficult to clearly reconcile these two things in the Guideline, and we will need to track its implementation. It intentionally sounds more “legal” than our other Guidelines so that it can be recognized by the broader society in which we function as a legitimate tool to address sexual misconduct.

The Guideline, as adopted by the World Conference, offers several approaches a person can use when they have concerns that an incident of sexual misconduct has occurred in RC. They may choose to resolve the situation informally, with or without the assistance of an RC leader. They may choose to use the process in Guideline M.5., Part A, which involves speaking directly to the person they believe has mistreated them and including leadership as needed to find a resolution. Or they may use the more formal process in Guideline M.5., Part B, which defines sexual misconduct and harassment and lays out several options for someone who brings forth a concern. Using the more formal process puts the Regional Reference Person and an ad hoc Complaint Review Committee (CRC)—chosen by the International Liberation Reference Person for Women and the International Reference Person—in charge of handling the concern. (Membership of the CRC will vary depending on the situation.) It lists steps the RC Community might take if the information gathered substantiates a claim of sexual misconduct, and steps the person believed to have engaged in sexual misconduct can take if they wish to stay in the RC Community.

Guideline M.5. also refers to a Sexual Misconduct (Guideline M.5.) Resource Document that contains more thinking about RC and our work on closeness, sex, the liberation of some constituencies, and sexual misconduct. You can find it at www.rc.org/publication/guidelines/m5_resource_doc.

Tim Jackins

International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities

Diane Shisk

Former Alternate International Reference Person for the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities