

NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND OF TENNESSEE CODE OF CONDUCT

I. Introduction

The National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee is part of a nationwide community of members and friends who believe in the hopes and dreams of the nation's blind. The Federation knows that blindness is not the characteristic that defines you or your future. Every day we raise the expectations of blind people, because low expectations create obstacles between blind people and our dreams. You can live the life you want; blindness is not what holds you back. To help carry out the Federation's vital mission, this Code of Conduct sets forth policies and standards that all members, especially Federation leaders, are expected to adopt and follow.

II. Diversity Policy

The National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee embraces diversity and full participation as core values in its mission to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind. We are committed to building and maintaining a statewide organization with local chapters and divisions that is unified in its priorities and programs and is directed by the membership. We respect differences of opinion, beliefs, identities, and other characteristics that demonstrate that blind people are a diverse cross section of society. Furthermore, the organization is dedicated to continuing to establish new methods of membership and leadership development that reflect the diversity of the entire blind community. In promoting a diverse and growing organization, we expect integrity and honesty in our relationships with each other and openness to learning about and experiencing cultural diversity. We believe that these qualities are crucial to fostering social and intellectual maturity. Intellectual maturity also requires individual struggle with unfamiliar ideas. We recognize that our views and convictions will be challenged, and we expect this challenge to take place in a climate of tolerance and mutual respect in order to maintain a united organization. While we encourage the exchange of differing ideas and experiences, we do not condone the use of demeaning, derogatory, or discriminatory language, action, or any other form of expression intended to marginalize an individual or group. The National Federation of the Blind does not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin, citizenship, marital status, age, genetic information, disability, or any other characteristic or intersectionality of characteristics.

III. Non-Discrimination and Anti-Harassment Policy

The National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee will not tolerate discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, religion, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, national origin,

citizenship, marital status, age, genetic information, disability, or any other characteristic or intersectionality of characteristics. Harassment on the basis of any of these characteristics similarly will not be tolerated. Although this Code of Conduct establishes a minimum standard prohibiting discrimination and harassment, nothing in this Code should be interpreted to limit in any way a person's right to report abuse or harassment to law enforcement when appropriate.

Sexual harassment is prohibited by state and federal law and also will not be tolerated by the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee. Complaints of harassment may be lodged by a female against a male, by a female against a female, by a male against a male, or by a male against a female. Sexual harassment is defined as "unwelcome sexual advances, request for sexual favors, sexually motivated physical contact, or other verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature." The following conduct is either considered conduct that by itself is sexual harassment, or that has the potential risk of causing sexual harassment to occur, and this conduct is therefore prohibited:

- unwelcome inappropriate physical contact or touching;
- repeating of sexually suggestive jokes/references/innuendoes and comments about an individual's body/sexual prowess/physical attributes/dress;
- the use of sexually derogatory language/pictures/videos toward/about another person;
- the use of inappropriate sexual gestures;
- sexually suggestive propositions; and
- explicit or implicit threats that failure to submit will have negative consequences.

Under this policy, harassment can be verbal, written, or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of his or her race, color, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, national origin, age, disability, marital status, citizenship, genetic information, or any other characteristic protected by law; or that of his or her relatives, friends, or associates, and that a) has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment; b) has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or involvement in the organization; or c) otherwise adversely affects an individual's opportunities for participation/advancement in the organization.

Harassing conduct includes epithets, slurs, or negative stereotyping; threatening, intimidating or hostile acts including bullying; 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 organization's premises or circulated by email, phone (including voice messages), text messages, social networking sites, or other means.

IV. Social Media and Web Policy

All members of the Federation, but especially officers and board members of the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee as well as those in leadership positions such as chapter and division presidents, should follow these recommended guidelines when making comments online, posting to a blog, using Facebook/Twitter/LinkedIn/YouTube/Pinterest/Instagram/similar tools, and/or using other platforms that fall under the definition of social media:

- Promote the mission and branding message of the organization in comments/posts.
- Recognize that you are morally and legally responsible for comments/pictures posted online.
- Be aware that the audience includes members and nonmembers of the NFB, both youth and adults, representing diverse cultures and backgrounds.
- Refrain from using profanity/derogatory language.
- Post/respond with integrity. Though you may disagree with a post, be respectful and factual. Do not fight or air personal grievances online.
- Do not post materials that are inappropriate for children/minors to view/share/read.

V. Conflict of Interest Policy

Each NFB of Tennessee officer, board member, or chapter or division president (hereafter Federation leader) is expected to take appropriate responsibility to protect the Federation from misappropriation or mismanagement of Federation funds (including funds of the affiliate, chapter, or division in which the Federation leader assumes a leadership role).

Each Federation leader is expected to disclose the existence of any potentially conflicting personal financial interest or relationship to the full National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee Board of Directors and seek its review and approval, as specified below. For example:

- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of his or her receipt of salary or compensation of any kind from the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division).
- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of receipt by his or her spouse, parent, child, sibling, or other close relative of salary or compensation of any kind from the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division).
- A Federation leader must seek board review and approval of any ownership interest exceeding 5 percent in or of any salary, compensation, commission, or significant tangible gift from any commercial venture doing business or seeking to do business with

the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division). This process will also apply to the review of such interests involving spouses, parents, children, siblings, or other close relatives.

- In reviewing matters brought pursuant to this section, the officer or board member seeking state board review and approval will refrain from voting.
- Each Federation leader shall take appropriate steps to avoid unauthorized or inaccurate appearances or official endorsement by the Federation (including an affiliate, chapter, or division) of any product, service, or activity that has not been so endorsed. For example, because the Federation never endorses political parties or candidates for elected office, any Federation leader participating in the political process must take care to avoid creating an appearance of official Federation endorsement.

VI. Policy While Interacting with Minors

For purposes of this Code of Conduct and consistent with most legal standards, a minor is any individual under the age of eighteen. While interacting with any minor, a state officer, board member, or chapter or division president (hereafter Federation leader) shall recognize that a minor cannot legally give consent for any purpose even if said minor is verbally or otherwise expressing consent. For example, a minor may say that he/ or she consents to physical interaction. However, such consent is not valid or legal and should not be accepted. A parent or guardian must be informed and consulted about any action requiring consent from the minor. A Federation leader shall report any inappropriate interactions between adults and minors to the minor's parents and law enforcement when appropriate.

VII. Alcohol and Drug Policy

Although alcoholic beverages are served at some Federation social functions, members and Federation leaders may not participate in any such functions in a condition that prevents them from participating safely and from conducting Federation business effectively or that might cause embarrassment to or damage the reputation of the Federation. The Federation prohibits the possession, sale, purchase, delivery, dispensing, use, or transfer of illegal substances on Federation property or at Federation functions.

VIII. Other General Principles

In addition to the other policies and standards set-forth herein, state officers, state board members, and chapter and division presidents (hereafter Federation leaders) shall adhere to the following standards:

- Federation leaders shall practice accountability and transparency in all activities and transactions.
- Federation leaders shall foster a welcoming environment at NFB meetings, events, and conferences that is a cooperative and productive atmosphere for all members and nonmembers.
- Federation leaders shall interact with NFB staff in a professional manner and follow proper channels of authority and communication.
- Federation leaders shall positively promote the NFB through verbal and written communication.
- Whenever possible, Federation leaders and members are strongly encouraged to handle conflicts or complaints involving other members privately, directly, and respectfully. Nothing in this standard is intended to limit a Federation leader's or member's right to pursue organizational change through appropriate methods or to limit anyone's right to file a complaint for violation of this Code when necessary.

IX. Violations and Complaint Procedure

Violations of this Code of Conduct, after first being established through the process set-forth below, are subject to disciplinary action by the Federation. Such disciplinary actions may include but are not limited to counselling, verbal and/or written reprimand, probation, suspension or termination of officer/leadership duties, and/or suspension or expulsion from the Federation.

- Any complaint for a violation of this Code of Conduct shall be filed with the state president. The state president shall appoint a committee of no more than four persons to investigate the complaint and provide a recommendation for action or lack thereof. The committee shall be comprised of persons not directly involved in the matters being raised and who can be completely unbiased about the individuals and issues addressed in the complaint. Every effort shall be made to appoint a committee reflecting the broad diversity of individuals in the Federation. The state president shall inform the national President in a timely fashion of any complaints filed and report on the resolution of such complaints.
- Complaints shall be treated as confidential in order to protect the identity and reputation of the person about whom the complaint is filed and the person filing the complaint.
- All complaints shall be filed as promptly as possible. Except under extreme circumstances, no complaint shall be accepted or investigated after a year from the time of the alleged violation of this Code.

- Complaints that turn out to be false and used for the purpose of harassing, intimidating, or retaliating against someone will be subject to the same kind of disciplinary action enumerated above.
- Any person dissatisfied with the resolution of a complaint may file an appeal with the National Federation of the Blind of Tennessee Board of Directors, which may, in its discretion, take such action as it deems necessary. If a person is still dissatisfied, such person may raise the matter to the national board of directors, which may, in its discretion, take whatever action it deems necessary. No national or state board member shall participate in the consideration of an appeal under this Code if such board member is the subject of the complaint or if such board member cannot be completely unbiased, impartial, and fair while considering the matter.

X. Minimum Standard

This Code of Conduct is intended to recite a minimum set of standards expected of Federation members. It sets forth the spirit that the Federation expects of all of its participants toward each other and toward those who work with the Federation at all of its levels. It is intended to be interpreted broadly to instill a respectful, cooperative, and welcoming spirit in members and in the activities of the Federation.

XI. Federation Pledge and Acknowledgement of Code of Conduct

I, _____, pledge to participate actively in the efforts of the National Federation of the Blind to achieve equality, opportunity, and security for the blind; to support the policies and programs of the Federation; and to abide by its Constitution. I further acknowledge that I have read this Code of Conduct and that I will follow its policies, standards, and principles.

Note: The Board of Directors of the National Federation of the Blind Tennessee unanimously adopted this Code of Conduct on April 6, 2018. In adopting this Code, the Board expressed its clear intent that this Code shall be reviewed annually or at any other time as necessary.