

Seattle Atheists Code of Conduct Policy April 2013

I. Purpose:

Seattle Atheists is committed to ensuring that events, meetings and Seattle Atheists sponsored public gatherings are free from discrimination and harassment. This document establishes policy & procedure for Seattle Atheists regarding approaches to disruptive and/or harassing behavior at Seattle Atheists events, in Seattle Atheists venues, or by Seattle Atheists members representing Seattle Atheists.

The goals are (a) to ensure that atheists/agnostics do not feel left out of, or opt out of, this group and this community because of their perception of a hostile environment, and (b) to ensure that individuals representing Seattle Atheists do not do so in a negative light. Discrimination and harassment will not be tolerated in any circumstances. Disciplinary action will be taken, when necessary, against any member or anyone acting as an agent or guest of Seattle Atheists who violates the policy.

II. Definition and description of scope and jurisdiction

A. Online interactions:

- 1) Forums and Comment sections (e.g. Meetup, Seattle Atheists website, Facebook, etc.)
- 2) Seattle Atheists' own web presence (e.g. Twitter, Google AdWords, Seattle Atheists website)
- 3) Any member explicitly representing Seattle Atheists on any online interaction

B. In-person interactions:

- 1) Events:
 - a) Those attended mostly by Seattle Atheists members (e.g. Board meetings, election meetings)
 - b) Those attended by Seattle Atheists members & Seattle Atheists Meetup members (e.g. Board meetings, other Seattle Atheists meetings, Seattle Atheists Meetups)
 - c) Those advertised to the public and attended by Seattle Atheists members, Seattle Atheists Meetup members, and interested members of the public
 - d) Those in which contact with many members of public is **intended** (e.g. street fairs, parades)
- 2) People:
 - a) Seattle Atheists members
 - b) Seattle Atheists Meetup members who aren't dues-paying Seattle Atheists members
 - c) General public who are attending events Seattle Atheists puts on and advertises to the public

- d) General public who come in contact with Seattle Atheists at public events
- 3) Locations:
 - a) Private homes (small Seattle Atheists gatherings)
 - b) Private locations Seattle Atheists is renting (e.g. 2100 Building, Ballard Senior Center)
 - c) Private locations Seattle Atheists has arranged to use but not renting (e.g. Blue Star)
 - d) Public locations Seattle Atheists is renting (e.g. Kane Hall)
 - e) Public locations (e.g. street fairs, parades)

III. Degrees of disruptive and harassing behavior

- A. Egregious forms of harassment (threats, voyeurism, stalking, assault, battery, etc) are addressed by Washington state law.
- B. Disruptive, harassing, and predatory behavior may not reach that level but would still create a hostile environment for our members and our community. Problematic behavior may include some or all of these elements, which are not mutually exclusive and do not describe all forms of disruptive, harassing, or predatory behavior:
 - 1) Denying one or more other people the opportunity to participate
 - 2) Denying one or more other people the opportunity to opt out:
 - a) from verbal interaction(s), or
 - b) from invitation(s) to intimacy, or
 - c) by using physical restraint (with or without contact), or
 - d) from uninvited religious proselytizing
 - 3) Failing to obtain consent:
 - a) for sensitive/personal topics of conversation, or
 - b) for purposeful physical contact, or
 - c) before presenting graphic material, or
 - d) for religious proselytizing, or
 - e) from subjects in photographs
 - 4) Failure to respect boundaries:
 - a) of personal space, or
 - b) in topics of conversation, or
 - c) by not changing harassing behavior when asked to do so, or
 - d) by proselytizing for religion without invitation
 - 5) Personal insults (verbal or non-verbal):
 - a) Direct personal attacks, or
 - b) Attacks on groups with which people feel a deep personal connection

IV. Reporting problematic behavior when it is experienced or observed

- A. At time of incident, contact:

- 1) Law enforcement if illegal activity is suspected, observed, or reported [See Appendix for partial quote of RCW 9A.36.080 Malicious Harassment]
 - 2) Any Seattle Atheists representative or agent (e.g. Board member, event host)
- B. If not reported at the time of incident, contact any Board member as soon as possible. For preferred methods of contact, see the contact page on the Seattle Atheists website.
- C. Reported incidents will kept confidential within the Board. If a board member is involved, that board member will be excluded.

V. Organizational responses to problematic behavior

- A. In an incident of illegal behavior:
- 1) Take action to involve law enforcement, if appropriate to the situation
 - 2) Confirmed criminal harassing behavior is grounds for termination of membership and / or banning from all Seattle Atheists events.
- B. For any episode of behavior observed or reported real-time as problematic:
- 1) A representative of Seattle Atheists (e.g. Board member, event host) should talk with those involved, including witnesses, gathering information including clarifying whether the behavior and/or intent require further action
 - 2) Speak with the person whose behavior has been observed or reported to be problematic to accomplish one of the following:
 - a) Have the person cease the problematic behavior
 - i. This may include explaining to the person why the behavior was experienced as disruptive, harassing, or predatory
 - ii. This may include physically separating the people involved
 - b) Have the person leave the current event, if the Seattle Atheists representative feels this could be warranted in an abundance of caution
 - i. This may include refunding the person's entrance fee paid, if any
 - ii. This may include contacting venue staff (e.g. staff of the restaurant or building) to ask the person to leave the building when behavior has been extremely disruptive
 - 3) A description of the event including notes from interviews should be sent to reports@seattleatheists.org
- C. After an episode of behavior reported as problematic:
- 1) Persons involved and details of behavior will be documented by a representative of Seattle Atheists and the report will be emailed to reports@seattleatheists.org.

- 2) Standard incident report will be completed, including basic details of the incident (date, time, location, parties involved, description of the episode) and (if applicable) how the incident was resolved.
 - 3) The Board will begin investigating the claim, gathering any further evidence needed.
 - 4) The Board will decide, based on all available evidence including past behavior, on subsequent action which may include:
 - a) Education
 - b) Warning, which could specify that the person gets another chance
 - c) Behavior contract (particularly in the case of an autism spectrum disorder or other condition affecting social interactions);
 - d) Restriction from attendance at events;
 - e) Termination of role as a representative of Seattle Atheists (e.g. event host, Board member, etc);
 - f) Termination of Seattle Atheists membership (upon vote by Board for cause) and/or termination of Seattle Atheists Meetup membership.
- D. In the event that a Board member is suspected of problematic behavior:
- 1) Reports must be kept confidential from the Board member in question. (This means that group email addresses should not be used. Emails involving the incident(s) should go to the individual Board members not involved in the incident.)
 - 2) The Board member in question will be considered to have a conflict of interest and should therefore not be present for discussions or voting on anything related to the incident(s)

VI. Dissemination of the policy

This Code of Conduct will be disseminated through ongoing educational efforts, reminders, and in the following ways:

- A. Posted on the Seattle Atheists website,
- B. Included in new Board member training, and
- C. Included in event host training.

Appendix:

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=9A.36.080>

(accessed 4/7/2013)

RCW 9A.36.080 section 1

Malicious harassment — Definition and criminal penalty.

A person is guilty of malicious harassment if he or she maliciously and intentionally commits one of the following acts because of his or her perception of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, sexual orientation, or mental, physical, or sensory handicap:

- (a) Causes physical injury to the victim or another person;
- (b) Causes physical damage to or destruction of the property of the victim or another person; or
- (c) Threatens a specific person or group of persons and places that person, or members of the specific group of persons, in reasonable fear of harm to person or property. The fear must be a fear that a reasonable person would have under all the circumstances. For purposes of this section, a "reasonable person" is a reasonable person who is a member of the victim's race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, gender, or sexual orientation, or who has the same mental, physical, or sensory handicap as the victim. Words alone do not constitute malicious harassment unless the context or circumstances surrounding the words indicate the words are a threat. Threatening words do not constitute malicious harassment if it is apparent to the victim that the person does not have the ability to carry out the threat.