

Anti-Harassment Policy

Approved by the AAGL Board of Directors on February 8, 2018; effective February 12, 2018

Introduction

AAGL encourages its members to interact with each other for the purposes of professional development and scholarly interchange so that all members may learn, network, and enjoy the company of colleagues in a professional atmosphere. Consequently, it is the policy of the AAGL to provide an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, and retaliation to its members and guests at all regional educational meetings or courses, the annual global congress (i.e. annual meeting), and AAGL-hosted social events (AAGL sponsored activities). Every individual associated with the AAGL has a duty to maintain this environment free of harassment and intimidation.

Harassment, discrimination, or creation of a hostile environment based on personal attributes, including but not limited to race, color, national origin, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, age, sex, physical or mental disability, marital status, pregnancy, veteran status, or any other classification protected by law, is inconsistent with the ideals and principles of the AAGL and is prohibited. Individuals violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

This policy applies to conduct directed at AAGL members, meeting attendees and individuals acting on behalf of the AAGL. It also applies to conduct directed at guests, vendors, service providers, and exhibitors, and others while they attend AAGL sponsored activities. This policy applies equally to participants in the Fellowship in Minimally Invasive Gynecology Surgery (FMIGS) and all other Professional Interest Partners of the AAGL.

Definition of Harassment

Harassment is defined as verbal, physical, visual or any other conduct related to gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, national origin, religion, age, marital status, or any other status protected by law; deliberate intimidation, stalking or other acts designed to threaten, intimidate or coerce; harassing photography or recording; sustained disruption of talks, presentations, or other events; and/or inappropriate physical contact.

Harassment can also be verbal, physical, visual or any other conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual, or group of individuals, that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment; or, unreasonably interferes with an individual's performance or participation in AAGL sponsored activities.

Harassing conduct may include a range of subtle and not so subtle behaviors such as: epithets; derogatory comments or slurs; clothing that displays vulgar or obscene phrases, remarks or images which may be racially, sexually or otherwise offensive; negative stereotyping; derogatory posters, notices, bulletins, cartoons or drawings circulated on paper, electronically or during presentations; or assault or physical interference with normal work or movement.

Anyone can be a victim of harassment. Anyone can be guilty of harassment. Behavior and language that are welcome or acceptable to one person may be unwelcome or offensive to another. Consequently, individuals must use discretion to ensure that their words and actions always remain professional and

communicate respect for others. This is especially important for those in positions of authority, since individuals with lower rank or status may be reluctant to express their objections or discomfort regarding unwelcome behavior.

Definition of Sexual Harassment

Harassment may also be sexual, and is defined as unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and any other verbal, physical, and/or visual conduct of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment does not refer to occasional compliments of a socially acceptable nature or consensual personal and social relationships. It refers to behavior that is not welcome, is personally offensive, debilitates morale, and therefore, interferes with work effectiveness.

The following are examples of behavior that, when unwelcome, may constitute sexual harassment: sexual flirtations, advances, or propositions; verbal comments or physical actions of a sexual nature; sexually degrading words used to describe an individual or group; a display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures; sexually explicit jokes; unnecessary touching.

Sexual harassment also occurs when submission to unwelcome sexual conduct is explicitly or implicitly made a term or condition of an opportunity, education, benefit, evaluation, or employment. It also occurs when inappropriate sexual conduct is severe, persistent, repetitive or pervasive enough to create a professional or educational environment that most people would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.

Sexual relationships between supervisors and subordinate employees or associates, including fellows, or between educators and subordinate trainees, are not acceptable even if consensual. The supervisory role should be eliminated if the parties wish to pursue their relationship. AAGL, JMIG, SurgeryU and FMIGS Board members are supervisory roles.

Definition of Discrimination

Discrimination refers to bias or prejudice resulting in denial of opportunity, or unfair treatment regarding selection or promotion. Discrimination is commonly based on factors such as age, disability, ethnicity, origin, political belief, race, religion, sex, or any other status protected by law which is irrelevant to a person's competence or suitability. Discrimination may also occur when one individual is unfairly selected or treated in a positive light through favoritism or cronyism over others.

Expected Behavior

All AAGL members, guests, and industry partners are expected to abide by this Anti-Harassment Policy during all AAGL sponsored activities, including all meetings and ancillary events. Attendees asked to stop any harassing, discriminatory, or retaliatory behavior are expected to comply immediately, without retaliation.

Grievance Committee

Complaints made under this policy will be investigated and adjudicated by a committee appointed according to the Grievance Committee Policy.

Reporting an Incident

AAGL encourages reporting all perceived incidents of harassment, discrimination, or retaliation. Any individual covered by this policy who believes that he or she has been subjected to such an inappropriate incident has three (3) options for reporting:

1. By email or phone to: The Executive Director, Linda Michels, at lmichels@aagl.org, or (714) 503-6200.
2. By email to the Grievance Committee of AAGL at: grievance@aagl.org
3. By toll free phone to AAGL's confidential 3rd party hotline: (833) 995-AAGL (2245) during the AAGL Annual or Regional Meetings.

All persons who witness potential harassment, discrimination, or other harmful behavior during AAGL sponsored activities are expected to report the incident and be proactive in helping to mitigate or avoid that harm and to alert appropriate authorities if someone is in imminent physical danger.

Timeliness in Reporting

AAGL supports the immediate reporting of complaints so that rapid and constructive action can be taken. The very nature of harassment makes it difficult to detect unless the person being harmed reports his or her concerns. The reporting of harassment before it becomes severe or persistent is encouraged.

Investigation Process and Disciplinary Action

Any reported allegations of harassment, discrimination, and/or retaliation will be taken seriously and investigated promptly, thoroughly and impartially. In general, an investigation will consist of the following steps:

- Once a report is received, the Executive Director or the Grievance Committee will retain an external consultant with expertise in assessing harassment complaints to investigate the report.
- In most cases, the complainant will be interviewed first, and the complaint reviewed. If the complainant has not already filed a written complaint, he or she may be asked to do so.
- The details of the complaint should be explained to the alleged offender by the investigator.
- The alleged offender will be given a reasonable chance to respond to the evidence of the complainant and to bring his or her own evidence.
- If facts are in dispute, further investigatory steps may include interviewing those named as witnesses.
- If, for any reason, the investigator is in doubt about whether or how to continue, he or she will seek appropriate outside legal counsel.
- When the investigation is complete, the investigator will report the findings to the Grievance Committee along with a recommendation for further action.
- The Grievance Committee shall bring the recommendation to the full AAGL Board of Directors for review without disclosing the identity of the parties.
- The AAGL Board of Directors shall remain blinded to the identities of the parties involved, and the AAGL Board of Directors shall be informed only after the determination is made to either approve or reject the recommendation from the Grievance Committee.
- Any adverse action will require AAGL Board approval.

Event security and/or local law enforcement may be involved, as appropriate, based on the specific circumstances. Following the investigation, the AAGL Board of Directors may take any action deemed appropriate against individuals engaging in behavior prohibited by this policy. Individuals making allegations of harassment in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action by the Executive Board.

Meetings related to the investigation of the complaint will occur at the AAGL office. Other meeting locations may be used at the sole discretion of the Executive Director, and/or designated counsel.

Appeals Procedure

Anyone reporting a violation under this policy, or who is the subject of a report, who is dissatisfied with AAGL's process or recommendations may submit an objection with the reasons for that dissatisfaction to the Grievance Committee. The Grievance Committee will review the complaint, consider the issues and reasons for dissatisfaction with AAGL's action, conduct a discretionary interview with the Executive Director, and report the findings to the AAGL Board of Directors. Meetings held to address the objection will occur at the AAGL office. Other meeting locations may be used at the sole discretion of the Executive Director, and/or designated counsel.

Confidentiality

The complaint and investigation will be handled confidentially to the extent permitted without compromising the rights of others. It is important to recognize though that in the process of investigating a complaint of harassment, complete confidentiality is not always possible.

Retaliation is Prohibited

Retaliation refers to taking some action to negatively impact another based on them reporting an act of harassment or discrimination. Retaliation against an individual for reporting a harassment claim or assisting in providing information relevant to a claim is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Acts of retaliation should be reported immediately and will be promptly investigated.

Responsive Action

Individuals engaging in behavior prohibited by this policy, as well as those making allegations of harassment in bad faith, will be subject to responsive action. The Grievance Committee in association with the AAGL Board of Directors will determine any responsive action.

Responsive action may include disciplinary action such as warnings, reprimands, requirements for training, loss of a leadership position, or expulsion from the AAGL.

Questions

Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the AAGL Executive Director, at lmichels@aagl.org, or 714-503-6200.