

NEW ORLEANS SECULAR HUMANIST ASSOCIATION

CODE OF CONDUCT

I. PURPOSE

- A. NOSHA is dedicated to providing a harassment-free environment for all of our members, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion. We will not tolerate discrimination, harassment or bullying within the organization's activities, functions, or online spaces. In order to facilitate this, the following Code of Conduct for NOSHA members and officials has been drawn up, and approved by the Board on January 11, 2015.
- B. By its very nature, an atheist/humanist/secular group will be a center of controversial debate. This will include criticism and derision of religion, religious ideas and acts, or prominent figures of any given faith. However, amidst this discussion and debate, members are still expected to adhere to humanist principles, respecting each other and avoiding prejudice or abuse.

II. AUTHORITY, SCOPE AND JURISDICTION

- A. "NOSHA Officials" refers to NOSHA's Officers, Board Members, and anyone appointed by the board to preside over a NOSHA's event or online space (e.g., a forum admin or event host).
- B. This policy applies to the following:
 - 1) NOSHA Online spaces:
 - a) NOSHA Facebook group
 - b) NOSHA.info website
 - c) NOSHA Yahoo group
 - d) SE Louisiana Freethinkers (NOSHA) Meetup group
 - 2) In-Person Interactions
 - a) Events: NOSHA Meetings and NOSHA-hosted events, whether held in public or private venues.
 - b) People: NOSHA Members and non-members in attendance at NOSHA-hosted events.
- C. In evaluating compliance with this policy, NOSHA officers and board members shall generally consider only activity within the boundaries of section II.B. above. NOSHA officials are not responsible for adjudicating personal differences that take place outside of NOSHA venues even if the parties involved are NOSHA members.
 - 1) As far as possible, members are asked to avoid bringing outside conflicts into NOSHA spaces and events, to simply refrain from interaction with individuals whom they dislike, and to refrain from using NOSHA events or spaces as opportunities to further their aims in interpersonal conflicts that are not relevant to the group.

III. DISRUPTIVE AND HARASSING BEHAVIORS

- A. The NOSHA board and officers may act to promote the harmonious functioning of the group, to prevent disruption of that harmony at events and in online spaces, and to ensure the safety and well-being of members, participants and attendees.
- B. Egregious forms of harassment (threats, voyeurism, stalking, assault, battery, etc.) are addressed by Louisiana state law, and members experiencing this type of harassment should report it to the relevant authorities.
- C. Evidence of disruptive or harassing behavior at NOSHA events and in NOSHA online spaces that does not reach the level of a crime, but still creates a hostile environment for our members and participants will be considered by NOSHA officials in a timely manner, at the discretion of NOSHA Board members.
- D. Disruptive or harassing behaviors include, but are not limited to:
 - 1) Hostile speech or behavior directed toward another participant, member or attendee, related to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, or religion.
 - 2) Inappropriate physical contact or unwelcome sexual attention.
 - 3) Any failure to immediately honor a clear request from another person to be left alone. All individuals in NOSHA space have the right to opt out of any verbal interaction, physical contact, or invitation; interfering with that right will be deemed to constitute harassment.
 - 4) Libelous or slanderous expressions
 - 5) Personal attacks – demeaning a person rather than her or his opinions.
 - 6) Invasion of privacy through photography, recording, or dissemination of personal information without permission.
 - 7) Sustained disruption of talks or other events.
 - 8) Retaliation against any individual who makes a complaint under this policy or provides any information regarding covered events.
- E. Freedom of expression is a core value of NOSHA, and NOSHA officials will strive to protect that value while still ensuring the safety and freedoms of all participants.
 - 1) In responding to a complaint or disruption, NOSHA officials shall exert the minimum intervention required to restore harmony and safety for its members and participants.
 - 2) Mere disagreement or criticism of any culture, ideology or religious belief is not equal to intimidation, harassment or discrimination, even if such causes offense to individuals present. A participant feeling offended by such disagreement or criticism does not constitute an incident warranting any intervention by NOSHA officials.
- F. Additional prohibitions apply to online interactions, addressed in the discussion-group policies presented in the Appendix.

IV. RESPONSE PROCEDURES AT LIVE EVENTS

- A. Any attendees at an event who see or experience harassment or disruption as described in Section III are asked to report it immediately to a NIOSH Board member at that event.
- B. NIOSH officials may address problematic behavior at the event by:
 - 1) Directly requesting that the person cease the problematic behavior
 - a) This may include explaining to the person why the behavior was experienced as disruptive, harassing, or predatory
 - b) This may include physically separating the people involved
 - 2) Having the person leave the current event, if the NIOSH representative feels this is warranted.
 - a) This may include refunding the person's entrance fee paid, if any
 - b) 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.
 - c) Ejecting a participant is to be considered a last resort, and shall only be deemed necessary in the case of extreme disruption or threat to safety, or after multiple direct requests as described in IV.B.1 have failed to stop the problematic behavior.
 - 3) Summoning police, only if it seems that the disruption has risen to, or seems likely to rise to, the level of a crime.
- C. Actions to be taken after the event:
 - 1) In the case of an incident that was successfully resolved via verbal warning/instruction (as described in Section IV.B.1), the NIOSH official involved shall submit a written description of the event to the Board Secretary. If this is a first offense and the outcome at the event was satisfactory, no further action is necessary.
 - a) If an individual receives a third warning for the same behavior, the board as a whole shall consider whether additional actions or restrictions may be necessary for this individual.
 - 2) In the case of a more serious incident, one which required actions described in Sections IV.B.2-3, the Board will meet in a timely fashion after the event to decide, based on all available evidence including past behavior, on any subsequent action which may include:
 - a) Education
 - b) Warning, which could specify that the person gets another chance
 - c) Behavior contract;
 - d) Restriction from attendance or participation at events;
 - e) Termination of role as a representative of NIOSH (e.g. event host, Board member, etc);
 - f) Termination of NIOSH membership

- D. All investigations and corrective actions by NOSHA officials under this policy shall be documented in writing and kept on file with the Board Secretary
- E. 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)
- F. In the event that an attendee expresses concern for his or her personal comfort or safety because of the presence of another attendee, absent any prohibited behaviors being exhibited by that other attendee:
 - 1) The complaining attendee should be encouraged to take personal responsibility for his/her own safety and comfort as NOSHA has no security detail,
 - 2) The complaining attendee shall be encouraged to make a clear statement to the other attendee to be left alone, if necessary, or may request that such a statement be made on his/her behalf by a NOSHA Official. (If the other attendee fails to honor that request, s/he is then in violation of section III.D.3 above.)
 - 3) Where the event structure and available personnel permit, a board member or officer may offer to sit with, escort, or give a ride to the complaining attendee.

V. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES IN ONLINE SPACES

- A. A policy document has been developed for the NOSHA Facebook group, to be posted on that page. It is attached here as Appendix.
- B. Although written for the Facebook discussion group, the policies within are to be understood as applicable to all online interactions in NOSHA space, including the Yahoo group, website, and Meetup page.

APPENDIX

NOSHA FACEBOOK GROUP “HOUSE RULES”

Group Purpose

The objective of the NOSHA Facebook group is to enable a free exchange of information, opinions and ideas among NOSHA members and interested non-members. By its very nature, an atheist/humanist/ secular group will be a center of controversial debate. This will include criticism and derision of religion, religious ideas and acts, or prominent figures of any given faith. However, amidst this discussion and debate, members are still expected to adhere to humanist principles, respecting each other and avoiding prejudice or abuse. Following these guidelines can ensure we have interesting, entertaining, and productive interactions, even disagreements, while still being respectful toward each other.

Authority

Facebook’s Terms of Service ultimately govern all interactions in this space. Beyond that, the administrators of this group are entitled to deny entry to anyone they choose, and to revoke admission to members who don’t comply with the house rules. We also reserve the right to remove any posts or comments at our discretion. You participate at your own risk, and assume personal responsibility for all posts and comments created with your account. You are responsible for reading and following these guidelines.

Reporting

All members are asked to immediately report any disruptive activity, inflammatory comments, or other violations of these guidelines to the group admins via private message. Please do not engage with abusive individuals or trolls within the forum; this pollutes the page and impedes the fruitful discussion we hope to maintain here. Just report the problematic behavior to admins and let them handle it.

Group admins may be identified by clicking “Members,” then “All Members” and choosing “Admins” from the drop-down list.

Posting Rules

The following are prohibited in this group:

1. Personal attacks. You are welcome to challenge others points of view and opinions, but you may not attack the person him/herself or his/her friends and family members.
2. Any posts or comments that harass, threaten or abuse another member.
3. Hateful or discriminatory comments regarding race, ethnicity, disability, gender, sexual orientation or gender identity are prohibited.
4. Explicit pornography or disturbingly graphic violence, or links to such.
5. Discussion of illegal activity
6. Violation of other people’s privacy by publishing their personal information, or photographs/videos of them, without their express permission.
7. “Trolling”, or posting deliberately disruptive statements meant to hijack comment threads, throw discussions off-track, or deliberately provoke anger as a goal in itself.
8. Spam, link baiting or files containing viruses that could damage the operation of other people’s computers or mobile devices
9. “Sock puppetry” – the use of false identities to create the illusion of praise or defense of a person, to circumvent a suspension or ban from this group, to impersonate another individual, or for any other deceptive purpose. Sock puppets will be summarily removed from the group.
10. Posting on behalf of any banned member.

11. Reposts of deleted comments, or posts that draw attention to the fact that a group admin has deleted your comment.
12. Derogatory comments regarding the forum and/or disagreements with the decisions or actions of the administrators. Please feel free to message the group admins directly rather than air your dirty laundry in public.

Sanctions

The administrators are empowered to perform any actions they deem fit to protect the integrity of this discussion group. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Warning of users where they breach the rules
- Removal or editing of posts or comments
- Removal of a participant from the group, either temporarily, or permanently where required.

Bans are the last resort, however they are occasionally required to keep the group a place for the majority to enjoy.

Polite requests for reconsideration of bans may be entertained after 6 months, but members have no absolute right to participation in this private group, and the decisions of administrators are final.