

ASCB Anti-Harassment Policy

Commitment to providing a harassment-free meeting environment

The American Society for Cell Biology (ASCB) is an inclusive, international community of biologists studying the cell, the fundamental unit of life. We are dedicated to advancing scientific discovery, advocating sound research policies, improving education, promoting professional development, and increasing diversity in the scientific workforce. One of the Society's objectives is to provide for the exchange of scientific knowledge through our Annual Meeting and other ASCB-sponsored activities or events.

As such, ASCB is committed to providing a welcoming, safe, productive, harassment-free meeting environment for all participants, regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, race, color, age, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status or religion. Our members and meeting attendees are graduate students, professors, and scientists who are conscious and protective of human rights and dignity. Consequently, as a policy matter, all those present at any ASCB event, venue, or meeting, including staff, members, attendees, vendors, and exhibitors ("Participants") are expected to avoid engaging in improper conduct and incidents of harassment, sexual harassment or misconduct, or bias. Violations of this policy can result in removal from the event, with or without refund of fees, as determined in the discretion of the ASCB Executive Director.

This policy applies to our Annual Meeting, other ASCB-run activities, or events convened primarily to conduct ASCB business, and covers harassment and discrimination by or toward all attendees and participants, including scientists, educators, students, guests, exhibitors, event staff, volunteers, vendors, venue staff, and contractors.

In alignment with other professional societies, we indicate below the details of our Anti-Harassment Policy, including how we define harassment, and how potential incidents of harassment should be reported. Unacceptable behavior will not be tolerated, and appropriate actions will be taken as necessary.

How ASCB Defines Harassment

We expect all attendees and participants at ASCB events to abide by this Anti-Harassment Policy in all venues, including ancillary events as well as official and unofficial social gatherings.

Expected Behavior

All attendees should be mindful of their surroundings and of their fellow participants. All participants are expected to exercise consideration and respect in their speech and actions, and to refrain from demeaning, discriminatory, or harassing behavior and speech.

Unacceptable Behavior

Unacceptable behavior is determined in the discretion of the ASCB Executive Director, and includes, but is not limited to:

- Intimidating, harassing, abusive, aggressive, derogatory or demeaning speech or actions by any participant at ASCB, at all related events, and in one-on-one communications carried out in the context of ASCB. Event venues may be shared with members of the public; please be respectful to all patrons of these locations.

- Harmful or prejudicial verbal or written comments or visual images related to gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, ethnicity, race, color, age, marital status, veteran status, socioeconomic status, religion, appearance, or other personal characteristics
- Inappropriate use of nudity and/or sexual images in public spaces (including presentation slides)
- Deliberate intimidation, stalking, or following
- Harassing photography or recording
- Sustained disruption of talks or other events
- Unwelcome and uninvited attention or contact
- Physical assault (including unwelcome touching or groping)
- Real or implied threat of physical harm
- Real or implied threat of professional or financial damage or harm
- Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature

Exhibitors, including sponsor and vendor booths, are also subject to the Anti-Harassment Policy. In particular, exhibitors should not use sexualized or discriminating images, activities or other material. Booth staff (including volunteers) should not use sexualized clothing, uniforms, or costumes, or otherwise create a sexualized environment.

Be mindful in the words that you choose. Harassment committed in a joking manner still constitutes unacceptable behavior. Remember that sexist, racist, and other exclusionary jokes can be offensive to those around you. Excessive swearing and offensive jokes are not appropriate for ASCB events.

Reporting Harassment at an ASCB-Sponsored Event

- First steps: Any ASCB meeting attendee or participant as defined above who experiences harassment is encouraged to immediately inform the alleged harasser that the behavior is unwelcome. If the person is unaware that their conduct is offensive, simply advising them may be sufficient to cause them to willingly correct the conduct so it does not recur. Anyone who believes they are being harassed is *not* required to confront the person they believe has harassed them. If suspected criminal activity has occurred, the complainant is encouraged to contact ASCB staff and the local police department. .
- Reporting to ASCB Meeting staff: Anyone who experiences harassment is encouraged to report it to the ASCB staff, particularly if the discussion with the alleged harasser does not remedy the problem, or if the complainant is not comfortable with such an approach. This can be done by seeking assistance by calling or visiting the ASCB Meeting Management Office. In the case of a smaller ASCB-sponsored meeting, the complainant should speak directly to one of the meeting organizers. In addition to informing the ASCB staff, it is recommended that anyone experiencing or witnessing harassment write down the details, as they may be asked to fill out a report.
- Confidentiality: All complaints of harassment will be taken seriously and will be promptly and thoroughly investigated. Absolute confidentiality cannot be promised or assured, as investigation into the complaint may necessitate limited disclosure of pertinent information to affected parties, including the alleged harasser.

Investigative Processes and Disciplinary Actions

Investigative Procedure

Once a complaint of harassment is received, ASCB will begin an investigation. An impartial investigative committee, consisting of the Executive Director or his/her designee, and two key staff members or volunteers will be established. If suspected criminal activity has occurred, the complainant will be directed to contact the local police department.

The committee will review the reported facts (which should be provided in writing), advise the alleged offender of the complaint, give the alleged offender an opportunity to address and respond to the complaint, and as deemed useful contact any witnesses. The investigative committee may seek the advice of one or more ASCB Councilors or an outside expert. Once the investigation is complete, the committee will report their findings and make recommendations to ASCB Executive Director for decision in his/her discretion. The Executive Director, in his/her discretion, may expedite the investigation and determination if in his/her discretion it is advisable and warranted to take action during a Convention or meeting.

Retaliation Is Prohibited

The ASCB will not tolerate any form of retaliation against persons who in good faith file a complaint or assist in the investigation. Retaliation is a serious violation of this policy and, like harassment or discrimination itself, will be subject to disciplinary action. Reporting an incident in bad faith is also a violation.

Disciplinary Actions

Individuals engaging in behavior prohibited by this policy as well as those making allegations of harassment in bad faith will be subject to disciplinary action. Such actions range from a verbal warning to ejection from the meeting or activity in question without refund of registration fees.

It is a privilege to attend a scientific meeting and not a right. If this privilege is abused by harassing someone or discriminating against them, the offender can be asked to leave the meeting.

Repeat offenders may be subject to further disciplinary action, such as being banned from participating in future ASCB meetings or ASCB-sponsored activities and loss of membership.

In the event that the individual is dissatisfied with the results of the investigation, they may appeal to the Executive Director of the ASCB or the President. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the ASCB Executive Director or other ASCB staff.

ASCB Management Responsibility

Every officer, director, supervisor, and manager is expected to help ensure that ASCB provides an environment free of harassing and discriminating behavior and that complaints are handled promptly and effectively. The ASCB Society office and leadership are expected to inform the Society membership and all vendors and suppliers about this policy, promptly investigate allegations of harassment, take appropriate disciplinary action, and take steps to assure retaliation is prohibited.