

## Code of Conduct at MHLS Events

The Mid-Hudson Library System (MHLS) organizes and hosts dozens of events each year. Our mission for our events is to share high-quality, timely, and important information across our community. Events can include professional development workshops/webinars for member library staff, directors, trustees, and Friends; meetings of the MHLS Directors Association; meetings of the MHLS Board of Trustees.

MHLS seeks to provide an event environment in which diverse participants may learn, network, and enjoy the company of colleagues in an environment of mutual respect. We recognize a shared responsibility to create that environment for the benefit of all.

MHLS is committed to core values such as inclusion, viewpoint diversity, and freedom of expression. To this end:

**A. Speakers and attendees are asked to frame discussions as openly and inclusively as possible and to be aware of how words or images may be perceived by others.**

At all of our events, we strive to:

- Support an open exchange of ideas within a safe and respectful environment.
- Ensure access to physical and virtual platforms that are free from all forms of harassment, including those based on gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, family status, disability, physical appearance, health status, education, race, age, class, citizenship, veteran status, religion, or beliefs.
- Offer a space of learning for our community by welcoming and respecting individuals from all professions and with all levels of education and experience.

Please:

- Maintain a respectful and professional demeanor. This includes behavior online using the unmute, chat and Q&A feature within our meeting software, and also during in person events.
- Create opportunities for all people to speak, exercising tolerance of the perspectives and opinions of others.

**B. Inappropriate conduct which is expressly prohibited:**

- Harassment, abusive behavior or intimidation based on race, color, religion, language, gender, age, sex, national origin, disability status, appearance, genetics, protected veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other characteristic protected by federal, state, or local laws.

- Sexual harassment or intimidation, including unwelcome sexual attention, stalking (physical or virtual), or unsolicited physical contact or invasion of personal space.
- Other acts of harassment including, but not limited to, bullying, abusing, and yelling.
- Any verbal or physical threats or acts of violence.
- Any other disrespectful or abusive behavior.

### **C. Protest Guidance**

MHLS is committed to free speech in all its forms, including the essential right to protest. Protests are an expected and constitutionally protected part of civic life. MHLS imposes time, place, and manner restrictions on certain forms of speech, including protest, in an effort to realize our other civic values, including inclusion, viewpoint diversity, and freedom of expression. Opposition to an idea or event can be expressed in clear and meaningful ways at the appropriate time or designated interval without disrupting an event.

- i. Permissible Forms of Protest include but are not limited to:
  - a. Engaging in activities in time periods or physical spaces that are external to the event and do not disrupt the event, such as organizing a counter event or holding a rally in an external space, passing resolutions, issuing pre- or post-event statements, carrying signs, distributing flyers, and using social media to express counterviews.
  - b. Engaging in activities at the event that do not disrupt the event, such as distributing flyers, participating in interactive components of the event in ways that are consistent with the event format (e.g. engagement during the question-and-answer period or public comment period), and holding signs that do not block audience members' views of the event.
- ii. Impermissible Forms of Protest are those that substantially disrupt an in-person or virtual event in a way that has the effect of silencing a speaker. This includes but is not limited to forcing a change to the planned event format; disregarding time limits or other event guidelines to prevent speakers or other attendees from participating; preventing a person from speaking or being heard via such means as heckling, making noise, standing in the area of a room reserved for the speaker, blocking the speaker or event organizers from accessing audio-visual equipment, blocking the views of attendees attempting to view the speaker; using or implementing technology features, such as the mute button and the camera button.

### **D. Enforcement of the Policy**

MHLS has a zero-tolerance policy for all verbal, physical, and sexual harassment. Anyone who is asked to stop hostile or harassing behavior is expected to do so immediately. MHLS staff will follow the procedures below in response to violations of our code of conduct:

- Reach out to individuals in private conversations with a request to abide by the above-listed policies.
- If violations to our code continue after a private conversation takes place, remove the individual in question from the online event/request the individual to exit the in-person event. MHLS staff will seek the support necessary to accompany any offenders from in-person spaces

This code of conduct applies to all participants at events conducted by MHLS at all event venues, including in person and online/internet venues and social events.

Violations of this code of conduct may result in sanctions including, but not limited to, written admonition, suspension and/or termination of privileges to attend MHLS events.

Anyone who believes that there has been a violation of this Code of Conduct may contact MHLS staff, in writing. The complaint will be directed immediately to the Executive Director, who will decide on a course of action, up to and including communication of the incident to the Board of Trustees. The complaint shall be kept confidential to the extent possible. When necessary, the Executive Director will conduct a thorough investigation and report the results to the Board of Trustees, the individual filing the complaint, and the subject of the complaint. The Executive Director, in consultation with the Board of Trustees, shall determine the appropriate course of action, and, if any further action is appropriate under the circumstances.

Approved [DATE]