**Forest Hill Home Onwers, Inc. Anti-harassment and Bullying Policy**

**POLICY STATEMENT**

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that all FHHO Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors are treated and treat others with dignity and respect, free from harassment and bullying. All Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors should take the time to ensure they understand what types of behavior are unacceptable under this policy.

This policy covers harassment or bullying which occurs both in and out of FHHO meetings, such as events or FHHO-related social functions. It covers bullying and harassment by Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors and also by-third parties such as sub-contractors or visitors to our premises.

Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors must treat colleagues and others with dignity and respect, and should always consider whether their words or conduct could be offensive. Even unintentional harassment or bullying is unacceptable.

We will take allegations of harassment or bullying seriously and address them promptly and confidentially where possible. Harassment or bullying by an Executive Officer, Chair, or Director will be treated as misconduct, and in some cases, it may amount to gross misconduct leading to summary removal.

**WHO IS COVERED BY THE POLICY?**

This policy covers Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors working for FHHO or at our premise (The Blue Cottage) irrespective of their status, or position. It therefore includes all Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors, consultants, contractors, casual workers, volunteers and interns (collectively referred to as staff in this policy).

**WHAT IS HARASSMENT?**

Harassment is any unwanted physical, verbal or non-verbal conduct which has the purpose or effect of violating a person's dignity or creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment for them. A single incident can amount to harassment.

It also includes treating someone less favorably because they have submitted or refused to submit to such behavior in the past.

Unlawful harassment may involve conduct of a sexual nature (sexual harassment), or it may be related to the victim's gender, sexual orientation, marital or civil partner status, gender reassignment, race, color, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, disability, or age. Harassment is unacceptable even if it does not fall within any of these categories.

Harassment may include, for example (please note that this list is not exhaustive):

(a) unwanted physical conduct or "horseplay", including touching, pinching, pushing, grabbing, brushing past someone, invading their personal space, and more serious forms of physical or sexual assault;

(b) unwelcome sexual advances or suggestive behaviour (which the harasser may perceive as harmless), and suggestions that sexual favours may further a career or that a refusal may hinder it;

(c) continued suggestions for social activity after it has been made clear that such suggestions are unwelcome;

(d) sending or displaying material that is pornographic or that some people may find offensive (including e-mails, text messages, video clips and images sent by mobile phone or posted on the internet);

(e) Offensive or intimidating comments or gestures, or insensitive jokes or pranks;

(f) mocking, mimicking or belittling a person's disability;

(g) racist, sexist, homophobic or ageist jokes, or derogatory or stereotypical remarks about a particular ethnic or religious group or gender;

(h) outing or threatening to out someone as gay or lesbian; or

(i) Ignoring or shunning someone, for example, by deliberately excluding them from a conversation or a workplace social activity.

A person may be harassed even if they were not the intended "target". For example, a person may be harassed by racist jokes about a different ethnic group if they create an offensive environment for him.

**WHAT IS BULLYING?**

Bullying is offensive, intimidating, malicious or insulting behavior involving the misuse of power that can make a person feel vulnerable, upset, humiliated, undermined or threatened. Power does not always mean being in a position of authority, but can include both personal strength and the power to coerce through fear or intimidation.

Bullying can take the form of physical, verbal and non-verbal conduct. Bullying may include, by way of example (again, please note that this list is not exhaustive):

(a) shouting at, being sarcastic towards, ridiculing or demeaning others;

(b) physical or psychological threats;

(c) overbearing and intimidating levels of supervision;

(d) inappropriate and/or derogatory remarks about someone's actions;

(e) abuse of authority or power by those in positions of seniority; or

(f) Deliberately excluding someone from meetings or communications without good reason.

Legitimate, reasonable and constructive criticism of an Executive Officer, Chair, or Director’s performance or behavior, or reasonable instructions given to an Executive Officer, Chair, or Director in the course of their appointment to FHHO, will not amount to bullying on their own.

**INFORMAL STEPS**

If you are being bullied or harassed, you should initially consider raising the problem informally with the person responsible, if you feel able. You should explain clearly to them that their behavior is not welcome or makes you uncomfortable. If this is too difficult or embarrassing, you should speak to the President of FHHO, Inc., who can provide confidential advice and assistance in resolving the issue formally or informally. If the President of FHHO is the individual in question, you should speak to the Chairperson of FHHO, Inc.

If you are not certain whether an incident or series of incidents amount to bullying or harassment, you should initially contact the President of FHHO, Inc. informally for confidential advice. If the President of FHHO is the individual in question, you should speak to the Chairperson of FHHO, Inc.

If informal steps have not been successful or are not possible or appropriate, you should follow the formal procedure set out below.

**RAISING A FORMAL COMPLAINT**

If you wish to make a formal complaint about bullying or harassment, you should submit it in writing to the President of FHHO, Inc., whose role is to achieve a solution wherever possible and to respect the confidentiality of all concerned. If the President of FHHO is the individual in question, you should speak to the Chairperson of FHHO, Inc.

Your written complaint should set out full details of the conduct in question, including the name of the harasser or bully, the nature of the harassment or bullying, the date(s) and time(s) at which it occurred, the names of any witnesses and any action that has been taken so far to attempt to stop it from occurring.

As a general principle, the decision whether to progress a complaint is up to you. However, we have a duty to protect all Executive Officers, Chairs, and Directors, and may pursue the matter independently if, under the circumstances, we consider it appropriate to do so.

**FORMAL INVESTIGATIONS**

We will investigate complaints in a timely and confidential manner. Individuals not involved in the complaint or the investigation should not be told about it. The investigation will be conducted by someone with appropriate experience and no prior involvement in the complaint. The investigation should be thorough, impartial and objective, and carried out with sensitivity and due respect for the rights of all parties concerned.

We will arrange a meeting with you, usually within one week of receiving your complaint, so that you can give your account of events. You have the right to be accompanied by a colleague of your choice, who must respect the confidentiality of the investigation. You will be given a provisional timetable for the investigation. The investigator will arrange further meetings with you as appropriate throughout the investigation.

Where your complaint is about an Executive Officer, Chair, or Director, we may consider suspending them from FHHO or making other temporary changes pending the outcome of the investigation, if circumstances require. The investigator will also meet with the alleged harasser or bully to hear their account of events. They have a right to be told the details of the allegations against them, so that they can respond.

Where your complaint is about someone other than an employee, such as contractor, client, service user, supplier, or visitor, we will consider what action may be appropriate to protect you and anyone involved pending the outcome of the investigation, bearing in mind the reasonable needs of the business and the rights of that person. Where appropriate, we will attempt to discuss the matter with the third party.

It may be necessary to interview witnesses to any of the incidents mentioned in your complaint. If so, the importance of confidentiality will be emphasized to them.

At the end of the investigation, the investigator will submit a report to a member of the FHHO Executive Committee. They will arrange a meeting with you, usually within a week of receiving the report, in order to discuss the outcome and what action, if any, should be taken. You may bring a colleague to the meeting. A copy of the report and the Investigator’s findings will be given to you and to the alleged harasser.

**ACTION FOLLOWING THE INVESTIGATION**

If the Investigator considers that harassment or bullying has occurred, prompt action will be taken to address it.

Where the harasser or bully is an employee the matter will be dealt with using a zero-tolerance policy. A judgement against an Executive Officer, Chair, or Director will be reviewed by the full board, and a judgement will be made as to whether the offender should be removed from an FHHO role.

Executive Officer, Chair, or Director

Where the harasser or bully is a third party, appropriate action might include banning them from the premises or terminating a contract with them.

Whether or not your complaint is upheld, we will consider how best to manage the ongoing working relationship between you and the alleged harasser or bully. It may be appropriate to arrange some form of mediation and/or counselling.

Any Executive Officer, Chair, or Director who deliberately provides false information or otherwise acts in bad faith as part of an investigation may be subject to removal from their FHHO role.

**APPEALS**

If you are not satisfied with the outcome you may appeal in writing to the President of FHHO, stating your full grounds of appeal, within one week of the date on which the decision was sent or given to you. If the President of FHHO is the individual in question, you should write to the Chairperson of FHHO, Inc.

We will hold an appeal meeting, normally within one week of receiving your written appeal. This will be dealt with impartially by an Executive Officer who has not previously been involved in the case (although they may ask anyone previously involved to be present). You may bring a colleague to the meeting.

We will confirm our final decision in writing, usually within one week of the appeal hearing. This is the end of the procedure and there is no further appeal.