

Filing an Ethics Complaint Policy

Adopted by the Board of Directors on September 3, 2026

Purpose

AAW is committed to a respectful, safe, and welcoming community for members, volunteers, staff, and event participants. This policy explains how a member may raise a complaint that someone has violated an AAW Ethics Policy, and describes the process that follows.

Scope

This policy applies to complaints that a person's conduct may have violated one or more AAW Ethics Policies: Code of Ethics, Code of Conduct, Conflict of Interest Policy, Anti-Discrimination and Harassment Policy, or Whistleblower Policy. It covers conduct at AAW-sponsored events, in AAW-affiliated online spaces (such as official forums or social media groups), and in other interactions conducted on AAW's behalf.

A complainant need not identify which Ethics Policy applies. The Ethics Committee determines which policy or policies are implicated based on the facts described.

This policy does not cover general complaints about programming, products, or member disagreements that do not involve a possible Ethics Policy violation. Those complaints should be directed to AAW staff at memberservices.org.

Who May File a Complaint

Any AAW member may file a complaint under this policy. AAW also accepts complaints from non-members, such as event guests or vendors, regarding conduct at an AAW-sponsored activity.

How to File a Complaint

Submit a complaint to either:

1. The Board President — by email to president@woodturner.org, or in writing to the AAW office; or
2. The Executive Director — by email to ED@woodturner.org, or in writing to AAW office.

Either contact is appropriate. A complaint is routed to the correct process regardless of which is chosen.

The complaint shall include, to the extent known:

1. A description of what occurred, when and where it occurred
2. The names of anyone involved or who witnessed it.

A complainant need not have every detail to file and may be contacted with follow-up questions.

Anonymous Complaints

A complaint may be submitted anonymously to the Board President or Executive Director. The Ethics Committee may be unable to follow up with an anonymous complainant for additional information or to report the outcome.

Complaints Involving the Board President, Executive Director, Board Ethics Committee Liaison, or an Ethics Committee Member

1. A complaint involving the Executive Director or the Board Ethics Committee Liaison will go to the Board President.
2. A complaint involving an Ethics Committee member will go to the Board President or Executive Director and will be referred to the full Board of Directors rather than the Committee.
3. A complaint involving the Board President will go to the Executive Director, who will refer it directly to the full Board of Directors. The Board President will not participate in the Board's deliberation or vote on the matter.

Non-Member Complaints

Non-members without access to this Member Policy Handbook may file a complaint the same way, using the Board President or Executive Director contact information published on AAW's public website.

Filing in Good Faith

Complaints must be filed in good faith, based on a reasonable belief that a violation occurred. A complaint later found to have been made maliciously or with knowledge that it was false is treated as a serious matter in its own right and may result in disciplinary action against the complainant.

Complaints Must Follow This Process

1. A complaint is filed only by submitting it to the Board President or Executive Director as described above. Raising a concern directly with individual members of the Ethics Committee, the Board, or AAW staff — rather than through the Board President or Executive Director — does not constitute filing a complaint under this policy, and does not obligate the Ethics Committee to review the matter or any individual Ethics Committee member to act on it.
2. This requirement does not limit any right a member separately holds under Minnesota law.

How a Complaint Is Handled

Once a complaint is submitted:

1. The Board President or Executive Director, whichever receives the complaint, will acknowledge receipt to the complainant and forward the complaint to the Ethics Committee.
2. The Ethics Committee will begin its review within 15 days of the complaint being referred to it, to determine whether the complaint falls within one or more Ethics Policies and warrants further review.
3. If the Committee determines the complaint does not fall within an Ethics Policy or otherwise does not warrant further review, it will close the matter and notify the complainant and the Board Liaison of the determination and the reason. A matter closed under this provision is closed without prejudice and may be reopened if new information becomes available.
4. The Committee will obtain a statement of the relevant facts and gather supporting documentation, relying only on firsthand accounts; secondhand reports will not be used.
5. Within 10 days of the Committee deciding to proceed, the person whose conduct is at issue will receive a summary of the allegations and will have 14 days from receipt to respond. If there is no response in that time, the Committee will proceed on the information it has available.

6. The Committee will aim to complete its investigation and deliver a written report to the Board, through the Board Liaison, within 45 days of referral. The Committee Chair may extend this once by up to 30 days, and further in consultation with the Board Liaison, with written notice to the Board Liaison, the complainant, and the subject stating the reason and the new target date. The Committee's findings and any recommendation shall be approved by a majority of its members before being submitted to the Board. The report itself will remain confidential.
7. If the Committee needs more information from the complainant, or a witness, and does not hear back within 21 days, the matter may be closed for insufficient information. This is not a decision on the merits; the matter may be reopened if new information comes to light.
8. The Board will endeavor to discuss the report, in an executive session, at its next regularly scheduled meeting, after receiving it (or sooner, at a special meeting, if the next regular meeting is more than 60 days out). Before any decision is made final, the person whose conduct is at issue will have at least 10 days from the Board President's notice to respond electronically or in writing to the Board President, who will bring the response to the full Board for consideration. The Board President may grant a single extension of up to ten (10) additional days upon a showing of good cause, with notice to the Board. If there is no response in that time, the Board will proceed on the information it has. The Board will endeavor to reach a final decision within ninety (90) days after receiving the report, using a special meeting or electronic vote where appropriate to avoid unnecessary delay, while allowing adequate time for full Board deliberation.
9. Following discussion of the report, the Board may take one of the following actions by a simple majority vote:
 - a. Dismiss the complaint,
 - b. Direct the subject of the complaint to remedy the situation within a specified time frame, followed by a Board review of the requested action,
 - c. Censure the subject of the complaint,
 - d. Terminate the employment of an employee. This action is carried out under AAW's personnel policy and applicable law, at the discretion of the Executive Director — or, if the Executive Director is the subject of the complaint, at the discretion of the Board — in consultation with legal counsel as appropriate,
 - e. Remove the Director or committee member from their position under provisions outlined in the Bylaws,
 - f. Remove a non-member volunteer from their role or position with AAW; because a non-member volunteer holds no membership, this removal — rather than termination of membership — is the applicable outcome, and the Board will determine how it is carried out,
 - g. Send a written reprimand to the member to immediately cease the violation(s),
 - h. If the violation(s) does not cease, the Board may terminate their membership and remove their name from the membership roll,
 - i. If the Board votes to terminate a member's membership, the Board shall give the member not less than fifteen (15) days' prior written notice of the termination, and the reasons for it, before the action becomes effective,
 - j. Any other action that will be determined by the Board.
10. A decision under this policy is separate from, and does not limit, the Board's authority to pursue or refer the matter for further legal action, with the advice of counsel, where warranted.
11. The Board's decision is final. There is no further internal right of appeal. This decision does not affect any right a member may separately have under Minnesota law to challenge a termination in court.

12. The Board will notify the person who raised the complaint when the matter has been resolved and of the Board's decision.
13. The Board will likewise notify the subject of the complaint of the Board's decision.

These timeframes describe the AAW's standard process. Genuinely complex matters may take longer, particularly where the Committee's investigation is extended as described above.

Confidentiality

The AAW handles complaints under this policy as confidentially as possible, consistent with the need to investigate and reach a resolution. Submissions — whether by email or in writing — are received only by the Board President or Executive Director, and are shared only with the Board Ethics Committee Liaison, the Ethics Committee, and, as needed, the Board of Directors. They are not shared with the general membership. Complete confidentiality cannot always be guaranteed; for example, the person whose conduct is at issue generally needs to know what they are alleged to have done in order to respond to the allegations.

This obligation applies to everyone involved. The complainant, the subject of the complaint, those providing supporting evidence, members of the Ethics Committee, and Board members must keep the matter confidential unless the AAW authorizes disclosure. Publicizing a pending complaint or investigation may itself be treated as a violation of AAW's Ethics Policies.

Contacting Individuals Named in a Complaint

Once a complaint is referred to the Ethics Committee, the Committee Chair, or a committee member designated by the Chair, is responsible for contacting the subject of the complaint and any witnesses to gather information or provide required notice. The Board President, Executive Director, individual Board members, and the Board Liaison should not independently contact individuals named in a complaint outside this process. Each person contacted will be provided only the portion of the complaint relevant to their own conduct or knowledge, rather than the complaint in its entirety. The complainant's identity will be disclosed only to the extent necessary for the recipient to respond — ordinarily including disclosure to the subject, but not necessarily to witnesses — except where the complaint was filed anonymously.

No Retaliation

AAW prohibits retaliation against anyone for raising a good-faith complaint under this policy or for participating in a review of one. Anyone who believes they have experienced retaliation should report it the same way as any other complaint under this policy.

Repetitive, Duplicative, or Frivolous Complaints

This section explains how AAW handles complaints that restate matters already resolved, duplicate other pending complaints, or are filed for an improper purpose. It is intended to preserve Ethics Committee resources for good-faith complaints while ensuring every member retains fair access to the complaint process.

For purposes of this section:

1. A “repetitive complaint” restates, in substance, the facts, allegations, or subject of a matter the Ethics Committee has already reviewed and closed, without material new evidence that was not reasonably available at the time of the original complaint.
2. A “duplicative complaint” raises the same underlying issue against the same subject as another complaint currently pending before the Ethics Committee.

3. A “frivolous complaint” does not describe conduct that would violate an Ethics Policy even if all stated facts are true, or is filed primarily to harass, retaliate against, or gain an advantage over the subject rather than to raise a good-faith ethics concern.

The Board President or Executive Director, or an intake process either designates, will screen each incoming complaint. A complaint meeting one of these definitions may be dismissed without full Ethics Committee review, and the complainant will receive written notice of the dismissal and the reason.

If a member files multiple complaints raising the same underlying issue against the same subject, the complaints may be consolidated into a single matter for a single determination. Consolidation does not entitle the complainant to a separate outcome on each filing.

A matter that has been reviewed and closed will not be reopened absent material new evidence that was not reasonably available when it was originally filed.

A member who persists in filing repetitive, duplicative, or frivolous complaints after being notified under this section may be subject to the following graduated response:

- a. Written warning identifying the pattern of filings.
- b. Restricted filing, for a period not to exceed twelve (12) months, requiring any further complaint from the member to specify the new facts alleged, when they arose, and why they were not previously raised.
- c. Board-level designation as a repetitive complainant, requiring prior review and clearance of any new complaint from the member by the Board President or Executive Director before it is docketed.

A designation under (c) does not bar the member from filing complaints; it requires pre-filing review to confirm a complaint is not repetitive, duplicative, or frivolous before it proceeds. The member may ask the Board to reconsider a designation no more than once every twelve (12) months.

Knowingly filing a false, frivolous, or harassing complaint is itself conduct that may be addressed under AAW’s Ethics Policies and member discipline provisions, separate from any action taken under this section regarding the complaint itself.

Questions

Direct questions about this policy, or about AAW's Ethics Policies generally, to the Board President (president@woodturner.org) or the Executive Director at director@woodturner.org.