

# Statement of Right Relations

## Preamble

To live in right relations is to engage in the everyday practice of loving more fully. While this document attempts to capture our desire to live in right relations, the true embodiment of living in right relations can be found in our actions. In times of growth, we will use it to deepen our bonds with one another; during times when we love well, it will inspire us to love better; and in times of conflict, we will use it to guide us. We expect this commitment to be challenging, but we also expect it to inspire us to strengthen our relationships and deepen our sense of community. We commit to living and working with this draft agreement, adjusting the ideals as necessary and as circumstances require.

## Our Ideals and Our Living Practices

### **Welcoming and Hospitality**

We practice hospitality, welcoming all those who come to Affirmation.

### **Furthering Diversity**

We work to foster a multicultural and multigenerational community that sees diversity in all its manifestations as a sign of our strength.

### **Listening and Speaking**

We listen with respect and attention and speak with care.

### **Serving our Community**

We serve our community with generosity and good humor, and we acknowledge the service of others.

### **Working with Conflict**

We resolve conflicts directly, using openness and compassion.

### **Forgiveness and Reconciliation**

We acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings and are willing to forgive those of others.

### **Solidarity and Accompaniment**

We support each other in times of joy and need.



# Affirmation: LGBTQ Mormons, Family & Friends

---

## Conflict Resolution Policy and Process

---

### Preamble

Conflicts are both inevitable and a natural consequence of living in relation with one another. We honor and celebrate differences but often struggle with how to manage them. Effectively managed conflict has many positive results. When people can disagree with each other and lobby for different ideas, our organization is healthier. Disagreements often result in a more thorough study of options and better decisions and direction.

It is the assumption of this policy and process that most conflicts can and will be resolved by efforts on the part of individuals and groups at Affirmation: LGBTQ Mormons, Family & Friends. It is expected that all members will use the Statement of Right Relations to inform their own actions and will treat everyone with compassion, respect, and dignity.

### I. Purpose

The purpose of the Affirmation: LGBTQ Mormons, Family & Friends Conflict Resolution Policy and Process is to guide our community towards a healthy approach to the management, resolution and transformation of conflict. In the spirit of the organization, this policy and process seeks to:

- Foster and maintain harmonious relations within the organization.
- Mitigate conflict through education, facilitation and training for the organization and its leaders.
- Establish an organizational process and structure for resolving conflicts.

### II. Guidelines

The guidelines that support this policy and process are listed below.

#### A. Parties finding themselves in conflict should:

- Take responsibility upon themselves to resolve the conflict.
- Use the conflict to mend relationships and provide healing.
- Use conflict as an opportunity for personal growth.

**B. Persons asked to assist in resolving conflicts should:**

- Respect and offer compassion to all of the parties.
- Listen with an open mind.
- Approach the matters raised with impartiality.
- Explore the facts with care.
- Excuse themselves from matters in which they have an interest.
- Utilize best practices in dealing with the parties and their issues.
- Offer the least intrusive intervention necessary to resolve conflicts.
- Apply the least restrictive alternative.
- Balance strict confidentiality and transparency with the safety of the parties in conflict and the organization.
- Refer individuals to counseling or other services, as needed.

### **III. Scope**

The scope of this policy and process includes interactions of Affirmation groups, members and/or staff with other Affirmation groups, members and/or staff.

This policy and process does not cover complaints regarding matters of organizational policy. Such complaints may be addressed to the Board of Directors (Board).

This policy and process does not supersede authorities given to the Board and the Executive Committee under the organization's governance framework. If a conflict arises that the Committee on Right Relations considers beyond its purposes, scope or skill level, it may refer the matter to the full Board.

### **IV. Organizational Structure**

This Conflict Resolution Policy and Process document establishes the Committee on Right Relations (CRR), which is appointed by the Board on an as needed basis. The CRR has several authorities and responsibilities as outlined below.

#### **A. Ad Hoc Committee on Right Relations (CRR)**

##### **1. Authority**

The CRR is an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board to execute the Affirmation: LGBTQ Mormons, Family & Friends Conflict Resolution Policy and Process.

##### **2. Composition**

The CRR shall be composed of three members of the organization, to include no less than one Board member.

CRR members should each be a member of the organization who:

- a) Has been a member two years or more.
- b) Has exhibited good listening skills.
- c) Has demonstrated the ability to remain neutral in disputes.
- d) Has experience with the best practices in conflict resolution or is willing to learn.
- e) Has demonstrated a willingness to serve the entire organization.

### **3. Term**

CRR members will serve on an “as needed” basis, not to exceed the life of any particular conflict. Once all parties agree that a conflict has been resolved, the committee will disband. A majority of CRR members may also vote to disband at any point in time. Multiple CRRs may be operating simultaneously if circumstances require it. An individual may serve on more than one CRR simultaneously.

### **4. Responsibilities**

- a) The CRR oversees the conflict resolution process outlined in Section V. It receives requests for assistance, determines what assistance and resources are needed, if any, and makes them available.
- b) In the event that the first two levels of conflict resolution process outlined in Section V are unsuccessful, the CRR is empowered to make recommendations for resolution, consistent with the organization’s Bylaws. It is also empowered to refer any conflicts for which a resolution cannot be reached to the Board for disposition.

### **5. Operational Guidelines**

The CRR will:

- a) Respond to each request for assistance, exercising independent judgment and guided by the organization’s Statement of Right Relations, Principles, and Guidelines presented in Section II.
- b) Excuse themselves from any issue to which they are a party or a stakeholder. Any CRR member may declare a conflict to exist for him/herself or for another member, and recusal will follow.
- c) When in operation, regularly report on activities to the Board.
- d) Develop additional procedures, as necessary.

## **V. The Conflict Resolution Process**

The conflict resolution process consists of three levels. When a conflict arises between groups, individual members and/or staff, the process is to employ only as

many levels as are needed to resolve the conflict. Throughout the process, all relevant parties, including members of the CRR, will be treated with respect and compassion consistent with the organization's Statement of Right Relations.

### **Level 1. We Work It Out.**

The expectation is that the vast majority of conflicts will be resolved at this level directly by the people involved, without external intervention. Suggestions for how parties can resolve conflicts themselves are provided in the Appendix.

### **Level 2. We Need Help (Facilitator or Mediator Process).**

Assistance from the CRR may be requested.

- A. A confidential request for assistance may be submitted to the President of the Board, the Executive Director, and/or a member of the HR Committee, as appropriate and in the manner chosen by the party initiating the request. This might include a written request, an e-mail request, telephoning, or placing an in-person request to an individual(s) listed immediately above.
- B. The group above (President, Executive Director, and HR Committee) will review the request, determine if it is within the scope of this policy, meet with requestor, and where appropriate, call a CRR into being.
- C. The CRR will conduct preliminary fact finding, as appropriate.
- D. The CRR will recommend next steps. Options include:
  1. Coaching - one or both parties may benefit from the help of a person experienced with conflict resolution to help them gain additional skills or techniques to resolve the situation themselves.
  2. Facilitated Discussion - In some instances, parties may simply wish to have a third party lead a conversation for the purpose of assisting parties in understanding each other and the issues, and potentially reaching resolution.
  3. Voluntary Mediation - Mediation seeks to focus on parties' willingness to solve the problem rather than finding out if someone is guilty or at fault.
  4. Since it is a collaborative effort between the parties in dispute, the mediation process helps the parties clarify misunderstandings and improve communication. The parties themselves determine the resolution.
- E. The CRR may identify and assign an impartial mediator, coach and/or facilitator from the general membership, depending on the recommended next steps presented above.

### **Level 3. We Engage in a Process Leading to a Recommendation.**

Either party may initiate a request for a CRR conflict resolution process leading to a recommendation. Both parties must agree before commencing with this process. In some cases, the CRR may determine that a more deliberative process is needed and invite affected parties to submit a request.

When the parties seek a recommendation, the CRR will:

- A. Send a written notice to request participation from all parties involved in the conflict.
- B. With the consent of all parties, conduct outside information gathering. This may include interviews, meetings, discussions and review of relevant documents.
- C. Prepare a written plan as to what the CRR believes should be done and submit it to all parties for consideration. The CRR will also meet with the parties and provide them with an opportunity to discuss the written plan.

## **VI. Confidentiality**

Without the express approval of the all parties, the CRR, its facilitators, mediators and related aides shall not disclose the content or substance of matters brought to it unless disclosure is reasonably believed to be necessary to avoid physical or substantial financial harm, or is required by law. At the conclusion of a matter, the President, Executive Director, HR Committee, and CRR are responsible for destroying referrals, notes, written reports, and any other documentation produced or received during the conflict resolution process, unless there is the possibility of legal matters, retention is expressly requested by all parties or required by law.

## **VII. Amendments**

The Board, Executive Director, and any Ad Hoc CRRs are jointly responsible for maintaining and upholding this policy and process. Amendments to this policy and process shall be approved by the Board.

## **VIII. Appendix**

### **Suggestions for Conflict Self-Resolution (Level 1)**

- Talk directly with those with who you are in disagreement.
- Examine the roles of each party in the conflict.
- Reflect on why the matter is important.
- Acknowledge your role in the conflict.
- Get a “reality check” from a trusted third party and compare perceptions.
- Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk in private as soon as possible.
- Use “I” statements and active listening in discussions (e.g. “I felt that I was prejudged and anything I said was going to upset you.”).
- Seek to understand the perspective(s) of the other person(s).
- Consider putting thoughts in writing, if direct conversation is too difficult.
- Listen actively and carefully to the other person(s). Tips for Active Listening include:

- Be with the other person, fully present and focused.
- Give the other person good eye contact. Don't let your eyes roam around the room.
- Take some notes, but don't look at other papers or reports. Don't take such detailed notes that you are missing the overall message.
- Let the other person talk, and don't worry about filling the lulls between sentences.
- Ask clarifying questions, as opposed to questions that contain a judgment.
- Mentally put yourself in the other person's shoes.
- Respond to what the other person is saying.
- Eliminate distractions, such as phone, pager, and email pings.